

STEVEN FRATTALI

COLLECTED POEMS

1985-2015

VOLUME THREE

THE NEW PRESS OF BOSTON

BOSTON

2017

ALSO BY STEVEN FRATTALI

COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME ONE

COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME TWO

COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME FOUR

***PERSON PLACE AND WORLD: A LATE MODERN
READING OF FROST'S POETRY***

***HYPODERMIC LIGHT: THE POETRY OF PHILIP
LAMANTIA AND THE QUESTION OF SURREALISM***

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Collected Poems, 1985-2015 Volume Three

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New Press of Boston, The

ISBN-13: 978-0-9995492-2-3

ISBN-10: 0999549227

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017961387

Acknowledgements: Early work toward organizing these volumes was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation of Taiwan.

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PANE OF WORDS

“through the pane of words”

Only Now

This intimate experience only now
 we realize
it is because an utterance and so to have

someone

[illegible]

then every movement an utterance

And yet it is small it is very small

it is almost nothing in itself

it can never reach
too far into the other the other's life

nor can it go too far into one's own

yet it is

Can you forget your own name? perhaps you have
already done so long ago
even though you don't remember

Gardener

You find me here my hands
my

What is it that I want?

my hands come to the place

so that the changing like rain and sun

darkness of

verdant dreams

to break the surfaces further

What is it that I want?

The complex fated
remnant this

The Anonymous

Whose voice was it
in your voice
you spoke into the dark
raised chin pointing like an arrow toward
a place you could not go
where?
where could you be hurrying
My hands
my mind in searching every running stream
wind through the trees
the rain across a fence
white sand
that hour-glassed my fingers
once
My hands tried to hold you there
names exchanged names spoken
names forgotten

Alba

Dawn bedroom pomegranate sun rays

window shade the color of a brown egg

breathes in breathes out

dilating

tapping

dawn twilight

lilac on the cotton sheet

the drapes just parted a gray fissure glows

burns at length

your eyelids tremor you sleep or else pretend

a blue glow along the edges of the blind

Risen at last the sun

across the lawn a small crab-apple tree

looks like a Chinese character in the red glare

We're like two matches twisted in the fire that was struck out of them

and yet no fire is like your black hair

After Rain

And after a rain wet garden

softest earth
like warm coffee grounds

mist-rain in the air

drops of water
on every leaf

the air
different here damp and cool

rain mist soaks the soft ground

heavy leaves

Here at the center of the garden

scent of
green mint basil

the sun-like opening too

in front of me the wet shining
this ground

Pine Trees Near the Shore

These shadows branches pine light boughs
air's sweet smell of green

dark water scent
and needle light

the breeze sometimes mist

the lake's sound itself
changing at times

Stand wait
breathe all

high up

sun is
needle glare

lower sand shadow -laced
in amber light
gray needles cones

jigsaw shadow boughs

now feel of noon

soft red dust of years

To Music

A fire burns and yet does not

apparent in the crystal's realm

O you who move there
locked inside that ice

the moment's light
warm brick and stone substantial day
slip through the fingers of my hand
less quickly
than does your sheer beauty

Like ice that's melting in the hand
love aches and burns
slips away
the living energy of day
vanishes
each instant at its end

returns vanishes
then
is nothing left?
-- one senses how the phrase must end

Like melting ice time aches and burns
and slips then from the numbed hand

In Memoriam S. A.

This quiet garden and evening light
 deeper the sun through trees
 gold dusty rays crossing
on the lawn
 the shadows now
 summer night almost come

The moths brown hay-colored one celadon
 one by one
 and the stars

Late breeze
 almost the scent of the garden 's earth
 or the flowers

Now sit here have rest
 just think

The night is still breeze blows now and then
 heavy roses nod
 their leaves touched by the lightly
 moving air just stir

Now eternal summer –
 these flowers I see have seen
 and will again

In Memoriam L.D. (hit by a car)

I walked along the hill above the town

The night was cold
the late fall wind had taken
the season's last leaves down
and their branches down

What was I looking for? –
I couldn't tell
But picked a broken branch up from the ground
struck it against the tree

I could hardly hear the sound wind was so strong
winter storm coming on
snow coming in soon

hardly a small human sound
that could still be heard

July

I have to shield my eyes

snow-blinded by the glare mid- day

the high noon sun reflected on waves
the sunlight foam
and the bay is lightning
or chrome flashings

The noon time heat high high sun
constant waves water
burning
monotony

looking on
you feel the endless the single wave

receiving from itself itself
wave foam wave

In the Corner

Up late reading the house silent
 cold night air of March
 seeping in

 in the depths of the window
 the desk lamp
 its white plastic shade burning

a distant, tiny light white blind spot
 in my convex forehead
 tilting into view a moment
 semi-transparent dome a soap bubble

I turn off the light

Now see the stars a bright full moon like talc
 sky of noble blue around it
 in the deeper black
 clouds of dry ice vapor passing at its edge

I stand between window and curtains
 these behind me like a cape
 I'm in a camera obscura
 waiting for the appearance of something

Then I move away turn the light back on

 a momentary lightening of mood
 a settling
inert silence suddenly

And then there is a challenge
the room echoing my presence
its interrogative positioning and focusing

each object places me questions me
the entire room now a kind of mirror

Asking Why are you here? Asking
Where are you?
Asking How much longer?

February

$$R_{\text{rain}}$$
[illegible]

a corner
turned though
and branches grow supple
just a bit

You fall asleep

and when you wake
find a change
in everything
sudden, and from where?

with melting snow
there's a mild wind, but different now
and likewise everything of which you're part

--but are you?

and restless, restless moods
begin to stir inside your heart

Sea of Day

Not yet noon

the sun hot high over the island

small stones in the road

glitter dull bright

in the heat and light stones as though of mica

heavy bright green water in the bay

Pines stand on the hillside

silence of late morning

Then the sun higher the sky white

wind picks up the waves foam and chop

spurting white on the rocks

a storm of light

dry wind the heat inland fields

are parched brown

like a scorched shirt

On the shore ridge bright gale light

pinetrees move swaying

hot sun heat and wind

Midday the sun-water

blade flash in tree tops
steady wind
blows the fine white sand

on the beach grass dunes bend one way

The weather pocked shingles of houses on the hill
their cracked paint
the tight shut windows the gray sills
and the cracked glass

the sand seeping in

These elements the wind here but nowhere

the water far off yet everywhere
the sand everywhere
but no one place

I walk down to the shore
the surf is rough
waves break on rocks
swell roll in water mist
and shower
spray foam trails wide

heavy green water of the shallows
heaving with waves

Water rock bright water-needles
aerosol glitter

drying weeds bits of shell sparkle
green silver distant water

waves points of
 water
burning mica quartz
 points facets of brightness

Light creating all
 incessant light

bright existence and change

And day is wide the realm, this realm of noon
 of sea of sky

these processes of air and light

of water wind this the seas of day

disclosed now changing
 changing without end

Vision

The leaves fall and fall

remind me how little I have

one apartment
no money

But the sun comes out opening
from behind grey luminous
clouds

poplar leaves are gold paper

green veins in the sun

Where will I be in a year? –
in two years
doing what?

Yet now there I see it
at the end of the alley of birches

in the grove's light
among fiery frost trees

Idea

You are

thing most needed

like spirit not

spirit

visiting the mind at intervals

and bring this light peculiar

light illumination

breath

However clear calm the moment

powerful

chaos of moods

yet you are

not thought

but unforeseen power

A Dove of Thought

All things speak
when one has learned of quiet

my dove of thought
so gentle with its wings

I listen to thought's murmur
then thought stilled

feelings stir echoes

and then
with no one thing being willed
of its own will
it sings

Plum

The plum ripens slowly on the bough

bears a sweet juice
fluent ripeness

sticky the heat of summer

What is flesh?

What is the plum,
ripe now –
what does one find ?

a point of world
of day

If I took the plum and opened it
what rivers of gold
what suns
what heavens of light and fire?

And

And is the spirit of the flesh from soil –

received from there
where?

To disentangle mind
from breath
breath from body
mind from earth

No thought
not bound to pain
or pain not part of thought

Everything's bound
unbound bound
this complex of responsibility

Act –
moving through
the partial world
burden assumed
lived
all
everything

Don't wait for certainty
nor crave what can't exist

Point by Point

Dark points zig
zag here there
grass
clover tiny shadows
sunny green clover leaves
green carpet
sun points
sun is warm
bright afternoon

Breezes
I lie here
on my elbow
sun burning my face

more shadows zig
zag here
there
in peripheral sight

sun-glare
another spot veers
two three four bees
rummage in the white clover flowers

Afternoon

The smell of hay
the uncut fields sweet
scent of grass
in the field
noon simmers

the hay bright yellow on fire
then sunset wind

In mysterious shade
dark woods
noon almost silent
your
shadow your steps
and a spider web
the low corners
where daylight cannot penetrate

But sunlight warms the garden's leaves
green heart-shaped leaves
pole beans broad sunflowers
tomato plants
flowers of pea vines

Now again
hot still noon and bright
surely some truth is here
moving unseen presence

Autumn

Autumn the apple tree cold rain

 night infinite
 infinite stars

 the earth untouched
only visited

 and flows
through black roots
 branches

Yellow apples in the grass
 slowly rotting fragrant

And the world has not yet been seen

the rust-spotted apple
 drops of rain on it in wet grass

 The apple seems old

 beneath the names that tell of it

 the names that it has been given

 yet nothing is old

 these things are only waiting

The Green Germ

Y our time here

awake now –
processes of mind

But the leaf of the white-blooming pea

silent being
and its life is sleep
yet time is in the leaf

and opens
deeper than water or light

opening the spring
its deep intent
and dies
rhythm
of space in emptiness
sound in stillness

But do you die?

In the Hothouse

The lemon on the lemon tree
a kind of arbor
with its perfumed air
and the sun is warm
on its yellow rind
through panes of glass
through dark green leaves

The lemon
its warm sour sweet pulp within
all distilled from light

slowly ripens
slow result of light
time itself so slow when creating
and silent

Being swayed
upon each point of light and heat

Now –
this moment
this air fragrant this warmth
this silence

Substance

Substance a dark light

slowly gathered

secret the cells
of amber
sunlight

a drop
glistens at the edge
light and heat are here
this slow fluid
suspension of time

Now tip the jar more –
honey
ply upon ply

clarity dark lucid sharp warmth
reflecting light

In the Garden

On hands and knees
fingers some inches in damp soil

a canopy of bean vines
shading and hot sun

Looking
something hidden lost

crouch here this noon

in the shade neck
shoulder warming
hot sun is so close

Sun streams green light
and water green shade
damp and humid earth

hands come to black soil
hands pick at
small stones
thread roots
cool dirt
hard ground

nowhere
not sheltered
in the light-cut shade

Where

Hidden earth

eludes the eye hand
not in soil

handfuls still damp
the rain

Not in the pea blossoms

fibers of leaf

torn thread by thread
inner filaments
green yellow water light
green fiber optic
all blank

Deeper in

earth
down deeper
root and
past root
in darkness where all sleep

at last

not there

not in the crumb of dirt not in
the scattered small pebbles not there

The Place

Come, this afternoon
down through rows
staked pole beans
where bumblebees
climb
there
steady humming
vines
noon glare in leaves
flowers with light
and petals luminous
a moment
there

Spring

Morning and we woke

Sun

on the ceiling
an eggshell white

not dusty light

but spring
water light

Involved

Evening's sun caught now

leaves and flowers
tangled together in light

a green sun
underside of leaves

auras against a green dark

glow

sun

still warm

I sit in shadows

feel the cool air

grapes hanging their vines

and almost

Origin

The sun baking the field
the ground
its sleep
seed
leaf flower
day
this root
that leads to
nets and
passages
within
dark
dreamt-of earth
being
one life
the sun
where the gardener's hand must go
in, inward
for earth has
these entanglements

To Emily Dickinson

Letters steeples bees eternity
candles
these that you burned
in afterimages we see
what you made brilliant re-describing

Solitude evening's sounds
a mood many moods
sharp quick words for each found

and yet still silence still solitude

Flame pulses with a fire's
simplicity

where? sheerest tongue

within

flickers in these winds desires these
held in subtle discipline

Now we in what is left here your art
find what is and yet
is not a presence
your voice within as at the diamond's heart
what is not fire burns in silence

Noon

The leaves the sun at noon
 in tree branches
 light
 one glare

sun
all fire points
 of fire
embodied
 burning

sun leaves a halo

aura in aura
visible light visible energy

of day

Sky a deep and luminous blue

and in green of every leaf

in stem branch in the roots of the tree
rooted in sun

figured emptiness

of light

In Early Spring

Y our bath water beads
 streaming
your skin flushed wet
my lips touch
cool
back away retreat
towels
clouds of steam
and the fogged mirror blank
mauve-blue water
in the porcelain tub steams
Your element is water it would seem
 but light
on wooden blinds unclosed
 shows clearly
plain wet skin goose-bumped a beautiful

Trespass

Walking far outside of town

Afternoon

sun high heat

grass tops waving a dry wind sound

the path
hard

baked
earth cracked

a cinnamon dust

apple trees to one side
chestnut trees the other

gray flat road
and no one

wire fence the fence posts
rain cracked tops

far off in the yellow
a gray barn
grass brushed my hand
the field smelled warm

no one around

Early

Morning

green sky

blue chimney smoke

the roofs

black light

across
roof ice

shiny

sleepers wake sleepers
 or not

clouds islands shale floating

with spotlights

rays around

bright rifts

Doors of light open open

Night, Summer

Breeze porch
scent of
wet
night-dew grass
dark bedroom
night rain
doesn't matter
before day
get all wet
anyway

Night, Winter

December stars

snow field

luminous earth

forgotten

Dusk

Fading light

dried sun blood at hill

stones in blue ink
a puddle

Indigo
after-storm

scab clouds breaking
sun spurts

Ash Wednesday

Wednesday gray snow
 ruddy ash of dusk
 twilight
 no thaw yet

 yet winter has still some light

to know perhaps

nowhere beyond the world, only one –

 yet is there?

Sorrow though and war of several kinds

And I no longer here yet here

 imperceptibly now elsewhere

 yet where?

What's left after such –
 yet soon now

 and yet take up again
 bright watery sun of spring

For Claudia, with Flowers

Dear Claudia

I've gathered the Queen Anne's Lace

if you
look closely
find one magenta spot

at each center just
a tiny dot
in this one, in that one
(I can't help wonder what it could be for)

But each one has a drop of purple dye
as though dabbed in there
just to catch your eye

What intricate white patterns they create

A lacy mathematics and so delicate

Now take them though so common they like you
are yet so beautiful

Morning Light

Morning tide of light across the wall

winter's clear frozen day

me from my sleep
and to myself

and then
you to me out of your sleep as well

awakening is
a new power, powers

and beauty here to be known
seen

Clear light

and your form revealed

Morning

here and now
a kind of mystery disclosed

and to be known felt as much as seen

as light

as light in your warm skin
this light of your warm skin

Darkness, Pine Trees

This darkness of pine trees
the bright glitter of sunlight on the water

but twilight here, and now

In you a river path and I follow it
wherever you would

And in the darkness
you are everywhere
your silences
your kisses touch desire
must gather
there

enigma of your voice

And at evening I have seen the fields

the rippling corn
the shadows of the wind

Close Window to Push Out Moon

When you lie undressed on your bed

your legs open to

unmoving air
your bedroom

outside
hot summer night

the moon
enormous
copper red

burning far deep in the trees

And you lie there alone
eyes closed

moonlight between your spread legs

--do you feel?
Silent

it moves all around you
an impalpable touch

When the night
like a coal
crumbles to dawn

when the moon is set
you think of it still somewhere in your sleep

how it is travelling farther

Lemon Tree In The Hot House

The lemon on the tree
 the arbor
 air
sun is warm and a yellow
 rind
 through panes of glass the dark leaves
 the lemon a heat within
distilled from light
 slowly slowest of light
time so slow silent
 Being
swayed
 upon each particle
 of light
This moment the air fragrant warm
 this silence

Beyond

Beyond

the black hill

sunset furnace

a black edge

Through

wire black trees

bright wake evening cloud fire

Light

at the hill

burns upward into space

through air

gold orange opal

Higher

acid green

flowing on through

from the low sun

east

north south

--the sky
so quiet

Cumulus and cirrus
at four levels

pouring east
wind driving all

Fast slower slow

lower higher
highest

and almost still

drifting calm

far luminous open spaces

filled with light

Open

open open

opening more

A shift then

almost balances

powers realign new forms appearing

TAIPEI JOURNAL

I feel
but
you must
too much
to take to give

Rain window
day and
I hear it
in bed

Where am
I? I think
Where? and
again, where?

You live in
My sleep I
Wake and you
Must die

Walking
The strange
City trying
To be another

Blade shadows
Sweep the walls
The fan's chain
Hangs down

Outside are
Evening sutras
And the
Sun buildings

You there
Down on the
Street corner –
Tell me all

Dawn temple path
Walking
Light flashing
Through her legs

A mosquito
Net around
My bed
I sleep

Inside
A Jellyfish
On night breezes
Floating away

The rain
In Taipei these
Opening curtains
From the sea

From the roof
Watching
The street
Hot and bright

The women with
Sun umbrellas
Are legs
And shadows

Window curtain
Dust motes
Fall down through
A coal chute

Of light
Open them
To see
Taipei

Now how
The sun
Is rising
Through the roofs

Years of
Incense smoke
Have made
The Buddha's face
So black

Characters of
Luminous
White paper and
Black ink

Flashbulb
Dark bright
Shapes
Of thought

Pale yellow
Green tea “cha”
They say
In Mandarin

Wooden sticks
To eat with,
Knives are
Only weapons

Vegetables
And rice
And this way too
We do not kill

Autumn
Is the time
For wind from
The sea

Now just dark
Umbrellas
Not bright yellow
Ones in sunlight

Crowds shrink
Into buildings
No one
In the park

Lights shiver
A bit then a crackling
Spatter
Against windows

Rain slanting
Then all
Straight down
Steamy gutters

I'm all wet too
Drying my hair
With a towel
Thinking of home

Looking down
Into the alley
Houses there in
A crooked row

Motorcycles
Go in and out
Too narrow though
For cars

A woman seen
There everyday
Cannot stand or
Walk she crawls

On all fours
Back legs drag
A bit front legs
Arms rather

Do more work
Hips waist flexing
Side to side
A baby crawling

Or a lizard
And so she pays
Visits to her neighbors
In that way

It's dark always
By seven
O'clock bars
And food stalls

Streets with
No sidewalks
And so many cars
And so many

Faces and yet I
With my one
Face try to
Be invisible

Roofs of the
City and clouds
Above
The roofs

Graphite feathers
White waves breaking
Smoky steam veils
With rain light

Apartment
With an extra
Door gate-like
Aluminum heavy

Barred but
Decorated too
And with a
Character stuck on it

Fu which means
Luck the
Always needed
Deity

Rows of shoes
Are left outside
The door
And once inside

Quilted slippers
To put on

The Chinese
Medicine
Doctor tells
Everything

By feeling
Just your pulse
One minute left
One minute right

Teeth stained
From betel nut
He exhales smoke
And gives his advice

Bright sky over the city
flying in the square
The day so sharp
So infinitely clear

Think of all
The young people
Their whole lives
Still to waste

Incomparable
Luxury
Beyond the sky
Beyond the sky and sea

Moody town
Full of rain
Sometimes so
Heavy

Only gray
Before the
Building
Opposite

Gray like
Bilge wash
From a pail but
Grained beaded

I feel so
Glad weightless
Elated
Sense of life

Empty nothing
Somehow
This sudden shower
The excuse of now

Woman long
Thin arms
Stringy muscled
Bone-showing chest

Open neck
Gray tee shirt
Pedaling a
Three-wheeled cart

Flatbed piled
With scraps of
Lumber and
Refrigerator parts

You watch me
As I pass
I try not to
See you watch

Gazes on
The street, street
On the surface
Of the earth

Lying in bed
One pill
Another one
When when

Will sleep
And then
Day when will
The day come

Small cups
Of tea with
No handles
These things

Warm to
The touch
From what's
Poured in

This cup
Has a plum
Blossom
Painted

On its
Side cool
Rim then warm
The sun tea

Roach feelers
Of gazes
Touch me
As I walk

And yet
How much
How much I
Love you all

How strange
And sweet
And interesting
You are

Apricot moons
Strung out on
Wires over
The alleyway

The stone seller
With his
Oiled stones
From Jing Men

Foreign city
Thrown here
By chance
Sickness follows me

Perhaps my
Death as well
Place of
Strange meetings

What will come
To me now?
Clouds in layers
Flowing

Bright sun
Burning mountain
Of rock how can I
Withstand it?

Knife edge
Of buildings
Set against
My eye

Sun edge
Bright shadow
Sharp in the
Burning square

Dense traffic and
Three wheeled
Carts full
Of things to buy

Tai chi players
In the Da An
Park which means
Great peace

I exist
On the edge
Of what is
The world

Who knows
What..... what...
Who can say
What will come?

Emptiness
At evening
Lying here
Before sleep

Objectives
Purposes these
Are not really these
Not really here

An old picture
Of Taipei
From 1964
Old fashioned

Carts cone hats
Bare backs bare feet
Wash hanging on
Lines see how poor

That some
Should have
So much
Some so little

This I can't
Accept I
Can never can
Never accept it

Temples with
Black faced gods
Demons
Deities guardians

Vermillion sticks
Of incense burning
We step through
Gates of smoke

Afternoon rain
The rain in Taipei
Comes down
Outside so loud

You rise
From bed
And go
To the window

China doll
I call to you
Joking but
You do not hear

Wind sound
Between buildings
Bright gravel spray
In an alley

Then cloud
Streams cover Taipei
Rain and the typhoon
Is coming

Yellow sun small
Through the blinds
A melon rind off
White and green

You wear only
A white tee shirt
Light veins cross it
And your legs

Sand colored
Shade so
Very different
The light here

Fallen in pools
Across your
Stomach and shadows
Your amber nipples

Dark outside
And wind so loud
Strange between
High close buildings

What are you
Now and where?
Voice crying
Through the rain

You lie here
On the bed and
You've come
From where

Shanghai or
Fujian province
Brought here on
Small boats

You and a few
Others you paid
The snakehead
Gangsters

If the coast guard
Had chased them
They 'd have thrown you
In the sea

Now
Here you are
And this is
What you do

Outside the rain
Is coming down
Through the night
On Taipei

The poems of
A courtesan
The ancient texts
Long laid away

Translated here
And now the
Courtesans brought
From dead pages

To walk the bright city
Cell phone email
Misery confided
In unsent letters home

City reaching
Out this way
And that lorry
Choked highway

Bridges to
The outskirts
Poorer yet
Not too poor

Apartments
Piled high
Over narrow streets
The sun green river

Through the
Apartment
Walking at night
Rain mist come in

Feel the damp tile
Street light rain
Cutting through
Blue light threads

You speak
Perfect
English as you
Say go ahead

Smiling
A little bow
Of your head
Your gray suit

How does
One master
A language
So different?

Everything
So different
Everything
Everything

High clouds flowing
Marble bright the
City day over
Taipei cool sea wind

Five Mercedes and
The rap singers
Before the Japanese
Department store

Your mouth so
Wide and perfect
Chinese woman
Your breasts' amber tips

Your hair so thick
So straight and black
(Unless you use some henna)
And your lips are red

Thoughts of the poet
The intellectual
The scientist – small silent
Things push the world

And still I do not
Know you,
But an
Uninformed love

Is really
The best kind
Dui
Bu dui?

How I
Love you
Moody rainy
Interesting

Maybe
Not exactly
Beautiful
Taipei

CALLIGRAPHY

Thunderhead
flowing through
light strings

marble columns
falling silently

High cumuli
wrinkled clouds
breaking apart

Radiant cauliflower
floating

Outside quietly
bubbling
popping tiny

Rain simmer
world fermenting

Glass sun
of noon

I spill you
over myself

Bead strings
of rain
held tight

Boring in
mist frying

Chilly
gun smoke rain

Jade watermelon,
and inside of it we find
a pink peony

Cloud high piled
back into itself,
still streaming,
the empty sky around.

An autumn morning –
the frost path leads to the gate.
Just past, there is a mist.

The water reflects
branches and leaves. One leaf
falls to the sky – three ripples.

On a very long trip
fallen ill and yet
in a dream walking
over a field of dry grass.

Wind through
all of space
like water
through a drain pipe.

Tree bark night –
Lightning
Strips down through.

Afternoon blinds
are mail slots,
the sun's letters
are left on the floor.

Morning and the clouds
are white breakers
sun spray misting up
in the earth's face

Evening's shadows
pulled out long.
I am almost all legs,
looking at the sky.

Evening air flows in
Through the window
I can feel what time it is

I breathe – now – silent
clamoring
of the summer night

At a public fountain
I rinse my heated face
So many others
Are there in the water

Sound of the electric fan
The applause
Of an invisible audience

Clouds moving
Over the face of the earth
Like a cloth drawn away

The sun shines
In the earth's blind eye

Cherry blossoms
On branches
The foam of cresting waves
The river tree

C
louds across the sun
Like my hand over this stream bed

L
ight through the blinds –
midday pushed through a sieve
into the evening

N
ew maple seeds
are twirling down –
green as the mantis

H
igh pillared clouds
float above the valley
dragging shadow capes

B
right lemon sun
squeezed through the blinds –
room of iced tea

H
eat lightning's hollows
here, there
the night's valleys

Lightning flash
cores out
the night points

Rain is white ants
eating away
the lizard tree

The flat shore rocks
are like bridge abutments
under the gray water

Seawater scent
as sharp as camphor
seawater cold as alcohol

My eyes guzzle the blue wine
of October noon – bright,
windless, not too cold:
cumuli passing through my bowl.

Taipei Woman

I

Taipei woman, you lie
in the open sheets, the amber room,
the traffic noise outside,
the ultramarine sky.

Your breasts, how soft,
your nipples dark coins,
soft buds on the branches
that open through your chest.

Open your shirt, open your
silken coverings,
I draw away bra and panties
as when one brushes away soft ash,
burning coals underneath.

Beautiful woman, with
delicate skin, slender arms and legs,
you've come here from Guangdong
on a boat with criminals.

II (She writes to him)

The heaviest beads
hanging
from such a soft wrist

I am weighing up the coins
inside this silk purse
let me see how much

Trying to draw the surprise
up out of its bag

The leaf's underside
is veined and ridged
there's a joining at a tongue's root

Where the stem of the leaf
meets the leaf itself
the smallest delta

I place a fingernail
on the eye of a blind mole
and it opens in an eel's face

What rain, what rain makes
such a mushroom
grow up from this grass?

First the soft slug on the path
then the garden hose
throbs with water

Follow the fish's belly
right up to its gills
with a fingernail

You are a poker
blunted with velvet
in a silken sleeve

The rings of a tree's stump
are like my nipples
the sun's face sucks me dry

I open a throat wide
for your swallowing

This

WHICH?

empty page --

(at last!)

An empty mirror
waiting for your eye

(I?

before you must change
--but why?)

your face

(which? --
without a trace? (!))

ELEMENTS FOUR BOOKS OF ODES

BOOK ONE: AIRMARKINGS

Find me here my hands
 rain falling
 What do I have the
 seed
processes of earth now opening
so that changing
 in darkness
 leaf and leaf flower green rain
What do I have I take
And cover it
 black dirt
 powers

After the rain
rain still
white mist
still air droplets
leaf and damp ground
close earth open
black with rain
mist soaks
deepest
sweet scent
of green

Morning rain still
 drips from every leaf
 water beads every stem

 bright drops at every tip
air of mistpearl thicker at distance

 breathing itself
 out of white here

 there

 branch twigs poke
 a branch spread so clear
 in relief

 and a streak of brown bark
milk leaves mist vines

 weighted down
this early hour

 the world
 cannot shake off the rain

Here

and there on

the surface world

leaves fallen trees bare

Fields

at evening

gathered

burnt

cold grass night's silence

footprints in the dirt

shadows reaching life not yet

Spirit

streams into roots

of

branch stem leaf of

light air

powers powers
burning

earth leaves

autumn

fire with all

rain

again

Sun branches

rustle in breeze

I sit watch

day is silent

feel

warmth on skin

blue sky

no rain

Moving shifting light
blades

of the palm tree
in thought almost
the shade

enigma

Dream grove of palm shade

the sun
glare

quiet light green

Apparition

closed eyes being

the unseen blue

April grass the night
scent the chill

memory stir

ash

wind clear sky

who? unknown stars

opening closing

You ask
the path
when summer sun vines bees loud
in the air
when where you say
then touch stem petal
touch
the flower's scent

O ctober burning

flaking the sunlit tree

Blue

and light

desolate

falling leaf

ripeness and

the silent noon

White blossoms

come out day's light

noon

flowered

O sun

inhabiting light

together

for so long

Form radiant

gold

impalpable

Time mind questioning

less than water

not even thought

Where is light

is clarity being

The rain still

still air-water

bright light drops

mist rain

falling or not

earthen-air leaf-wet

sponge-world

the earth

in its very being

wet

Silences echoing
 into failing light
yellow green
 sunset blazing gold
 yet silent

The lemon on the tree

the arbor

air

sun is warm and a yellow

rind

sun through panes of glass

and the dark leaves

The lemon hot within

distilled from light

slowly slowest of light

time so slow silent

Being swayed

upon each particle

of light

This moment the air fragrant warm

this silence

Open

burning light

speaks

kindling

searches

itself

moves leaves

now dried

Sun rim

twilight

wind maple tree
 of night

stars are teeming

At night snow falls silent

branches of the
plum so white

heavy flakes

no more sidewalks
now

And yet the earth

shows small prints

Filaments roots

finding

 searching and
finding

ground

 night sun

 deep well

Smoke of autumn fires
burnt evening air
drifting
smoke
green sky of noble blue
and the first stars
road like ash
earth is still burning
at horizon's edge

You and I follow
 these shadows branches
 of dogwood the juniper
 and honeysuckle
 all
The dark involvements flower

 one gives one's being wholly
 the change
 final
 and the un-crossable shade

Star-drift
in deep grass
sleep
world of light
perfect realm
many and many
many realms
never comprehend

This porch window and the night
 cool air the scent
 of flowers grass
very faint
 one instant gone
dispersed through the dark
 time-smoke
 stars
 the leaves

Fallen sun dark
 hills

ember light

star-sparks blown

from the burning paper of earth

spread open to the night

Trees

book of burnt matches

yellow light
is green

field path

hard frozen

breath smoke face ears cold

detail of star
needlepoint

then

Headlights the dark road

Grate of
 burning coals

 far below the charred limits of earth

drops past the edge of infinity

the eyelid of earth
 closed

carbon smudge of fingerprints
 prints the whole air

 Yet
the horizon's hand
 can never stop closing

 invisible fingers
of dark constellation
 snuff the last flame

 sun candle quenched

 wax caul of cloud

Later,
candlelight lies sunk is stars

 infinitely far
 beneath the letters of darkness

Autumn fires gone earth

bare

trees are
are not

fields are
are not

black sky
clouds of stars

deep
on and on

The wind
so cold walking

Woven tunnel through night trees

branches

weave of shadows

a bright breeze

leaves flurrying

the sidewalk's light veins

with shadow splotches bend

shadow-hands pulling the tree's hair

Dirt in my hand
seeds
held to
Light
roots and not yet flowers
But growth
 is hidden near
silent exclaiming light
Flowers
 hold
 sun earth

Stem by stem and leaf

light network

August sun burning
embracing

all and

each made part

silent heat whisper clamor of noon

Blue evening

orchards gardens

ancient rows

of hills

smoke

streaming

of burning leaves

footsteps

the low wall of stones

fallen leaves

the late sun

Tall vines

dripping rain
this morning

breathes

water air and light
mist

Hear the
water

leaf
tapping sound

breathe

scent of earth dampness

feel
powers

Furnace

setting sun

black phone poles and

far off

bristly

char of hills

red light

gold sand bar clouds

darker air indigo

no wind

Sun-leaves

glow on the dirt floor

spots of light

veins

in the wind

of twilight green sun

light

web of leaves veins air

light

cracks bright dust motes

spinning fast

as though stirred

currents hurrying

somewhere

No haze on the field this afternoon
The sun is white and hot vague blue sky
And Queen Anne's lace
 all through the yellow field afloat
 white
 the warm dry breeze
On the road dust shines white
 scattered stones
 glint dull gray sparkling bright
 sun center of sky
 midday heat field road
The afternoon silent
 sunlight the distant hill
 now there is no breeze
Now stop one minute by the fence
 You hear cicadas far off in the field

Midsummer grass light green

pale hot sun

white sky

grass waving hay yellow

scorched light brown currents of wind

Leaf green white-
 blooming
 pea

silent being time

sleep moves

deep water
 Light

Time the climate where

spring blossoms

in the process

in that stillness

The leaf

deeper than water

light

burns green grows a sun

hole

with trees

branches

blossoms and
dies

Ten miles

afternoon sunlight

Road

gravel dust glitter

glories of sky

yellow field yellow field

white road on so far

so hot and no breeze

What summer

of sunlight what day

we live move

Light the hand

shade and warm currents

What
thought

bright thought let go

Noon

so bright

the field

Stirs

waves

yellow grass rippling

the hottest

hour

presences

And the air is filled

Light

deepening everywhere

Light

desire

dreamed woman

so endless

weightless a moment

no longer

Nearing my step into the other realm

I dimly feel the limit of the earth

How strangely fast the seasons

yet all is still

I feel my past so vaguely

as though with fingertips

Sun

air quiet

still day

Bees

constant
hum

Light

felt warmth

noon heat

sit here

want just this
quiet

light warmth on skin

day life

present not yet gone

Shadows of leaves
 sun wind
 grass
 close to ground touch
 grass
 serrated shadows
 phalanx shadows
 soil breathes
 earth pale anemic
 grass stems
 each stem
 and the eye
 is closed here

Pole beans

twine

leaves stretch and reach wide

spreading sun-river

veins of light
water green river

curling tendrils wrapping

woman green woman

burns autumn leaves

discards wastes

grief

breath smoke of

leaves the cold air

white veins
of a leaf

in the frozen puddle

Eyes closed asleep or not

my watching who is here

feel the night's

rain now

where is

that

but who really

trees flowing tearing leaves

saying take this and this take more

to the wind

Questioning me

with your thought

your feelings

silent

far beneath

Evening sun latticework
 leaves

 thick tangled wall

 green arbor shade
sunlight
 so gold

 aura light day's sun

 lingering

 the massed tangle
 darkening

The breeze

 grapes hang look like wasp nests

 very dim brown light

 then dark

Morning
sun on the

light
spring
time

joy

diamond

wind
this burning

Evening violet clouds

 intermittent wind
 black trees agitated

Why only

 the wind going where

 leaves wind-eaten

 choruses massing saying

And yet
 the world is quiet

 hours moments

 no return

Sleep

blank where who

blankets warm

sun slats
 sand colored
light ladder

dim room

goodbye

curled toward
 inner
space

remote silent teeming voices

where wind rain
 seasons

say sun moon

farewell

again

The leaf

August sun

tall bean plant
 curling
tendrils green vines

white flowers pink flowers
 tangling

 flutters down

still air and green light

yellow bright
 seams of

leaf lily pads

pond water surface light

ripples flaking green yellow
 shadows

dim garden floor
 and cool

Overhead August sun

Stranger

secrets hidden

the evening sun
knows

broken the light-spokes
glancing off amber field
the hills' gold-green flank

earth is filled
empty

round apple ripe corn parchment sheaf
wheat foams dark brown in last light
bats skimming low

The path leads where

Stranger my eye sees the world
my hand cannot touch it

The sun hot air is still

fragrant atmosphere the garden

basil mint peppers

white and yellow flowers

leaf and

leaf and

green vines flowers

many

beans peas tomatoes squash with

broad deeply creased dark leaves

(favorite of toads)

a scrap of field mouse so quick

there gone

midday sun burning silence

blare of light heat whispers

silent stir of growth leaf and

leaf and stem papery rustle

soft cling of heart-shaped

green leaf

on the bright white tee-shirt

passing down a row

of pole-climbing beans

Hair in flame

Walk blue sky white sky

Then falling burnt-out form

Burnt evening air darker

cool

the black earth

fires grass leaks heavy smoke

the root and vine burnt up

Weightless star-crowded night

voices choir from a hollow stump

The night's many eyes

where

closed yet watching

shiver of wet summer night

hear every movement

of the leaves

our silent steps in grass

Even the smallest stirring heard

a thousand fingers

feel them all around

every word

spoken thought

where the cold dew's soak

reach into the open pores

of the wet stems

the breathing leaves

down into the grass

when we talk we hear feel

darkness elements speaking

living

I sit here in the deep shade

evening

grape vines

and the honeysuckle climbs

small chinks in the matted green

The sun's late orange light sparks

winking

no scent of honeysuckle though

A faint scent of the breeze

stirs stills

the mind in green twilight

meditative and there in no fire

undying still the gods of evening

The night air this
honeysuckle scent very faint
 almost a thought
 the summer night
secrets hidden in the dark

 the breeze
 stirring the jasmine leaf
the roses too one moment passed
 silence like thought
 almost unknown feelings
 searching

At night

reach in sleep walk touch

leaves flowers

lowest vines

the slow slug too

these realms of water earth

air fire

Wind blows

stars

night turns

wide empty
night

snow drift

sand dunes over

fences posts

snow crystal world

dark lost

luminous forgotten earth

Sun leaves at noon

not bright not

branches move

glare leaves glare

light points
burning

visible energy day

no form
of light

Grass

midnight
stars
the tree
grass touches
looking up
tree trunk
curving up
night
breeze dust
of stars blue night
branches
stars turn ground
drifts slow
sky earth

The sun baking ground field
 humming
 bright air points of
 sun
waves of heat
 shimmer
 sleep
 summer day
 roots
 in the dark soil
 being

The tear
opened up somewhere
the blood flow
moth pulsing
in spider of
blood's
web spider web of
a wound pin points
tangling
drag net of
body

Day uncut field high grass high sky
midsummer light
the still air
Silence heat afternoon
far air of the field clear to the end
sun warm light
waves move through deep grass
somewhere
the sound of water

Fire smoke

evening
deep blue horizon

rustling dry leaves

burning

drifts of leaves
ashes

Earth drifts
falls away

the night opens rises

points in darkness

light points
a map leading elsewhere

Green sky twilight

slate colored clouds

ember of late sun
tree branches charcoal

sharp in the brown light

flocks of birds

A wind last light of all

sun-spurts
black rooftops

then none
just shapes

just space itself

The wind

movements in the sky light

and the clouds

processes

Sun low hill's edge
 last light
 pearl ice-mist hill dark spruces
Cold blue evening smoke breath
 green sunset ember burnt trees
 sky stars
valley
 snowfield gray gone
 river dim more dim
 Where?

Footsteps creak in snow

green sunset deep blue dusk

blue light of snow silver shining

the other world

Walking

wind voices

dusk eyes the night

snow voices memories

gone now never gone

Afternoon sleep
and
window shade sun
sparks through
bright dust motes
small funnels glitter
dust light vortex
bamboo blinds
pale
ginger ale light
beyond luminous day
swelling receding
paper wall of light shadow stripes
of line and pulley
gold sun streaks very hot
burning depth

Snow night

walking blizzard

pearl emulsion around streetlight

snow falls heavier lost mind drifts

falling into sky night

face burnt numb mouth freezes

spread arms hold

white

ground

Stranger

white falls erasing

Field bright snow valley
river banks all light
 sun-fields east west
 cold radiant
aching eye tears
 blurs
 hand shields eyes
 sky clear white blue
bright frozen river valley
 sun-mist

Spring

shoots the rain
falling cool
and sun
green and clear
wind
bean sprouts curve
arching
out of
the dirt pale bright
green carrot stems too
onions
scented basil leaf holding
water beads the pepper plant
squash yellow flowers broad leaves
necklace of water drops down
middle
and dripping
down when tipped
tomatoes ragged leaves
white and pale lilac flowers
of the pea vines
bees buzz around them in bright sunlight
all afternoon

Berries ripe now black bright

```
heavy  stems branches
                                sag
```

swaying
in every breeze

drunken man noddin^g

dark green leaves rustle

the late time now

heat

cicadas hum

ripeness

mystery

WATERSCRIPT

SECOND BOOK OF ODES

The dew grass
 damp air

mist each leaf

morning twilight

water beads leaf

stem grass blade wet

mist

early morning
leaves

new as though just now

come from the flowing spring

Branch

ice crust

glass dripping sun

water drops
down my wrist

each bright

feel pulse

cold skin

Copper clouds amber light

rain green lawn

tree limbs black

evening wind

leaf garden

ripples

damp air
 chill

Morning

orange frost-sun

on the hill's eyelid

Water echoes in the well

Darkness

Where who climbed tree
 still air and windy
spiral floating leaves
 abundance
 far up amid
 fathom light
sky depth
 of pond mirror
blue shatter leaking
 more light
leaves float
 rising littering skating off
 elbow wrist eye
radiant earth not here there
 still waiting

Spring

opening heart
 leaves
 eyes many and
 many mouths
secret
 rainy tree green sky
blue sun white
 clouds filling basin
crowded pages green and
 tiny all
light
 light water warm wind
 leaves more leaves
in bright
 air
haunted infinite still clear

Earth

leaf
listening whisper past night water

dark
stirring remember life

sand grains

many worlds wake sleep feel

echoes winds rain sunflower

apple trees high pale grass

green full of sun clouds

pears tomatoes green bushels of peas
shining at bottom sand gold
trout sparkle

river white falls streaming amber
the night
shale clouds sharp slanting
rain

and our voices

deep in the fallen leaves

Silent afternoon

still blue high sky

empty

aura sky

silent afternoon

wasp at window hovering

cars far off

And sunlight tree boughs

move breeze a little

talking beneath window

then gone

light getting deeper

Field

September warm air still

high grass yellow pale green

white yellow in light

brown Queen Anne's lace

helix of two white butterflies

flattened grass-waves there

no breeze

air warm still

silence

sunlight filled

with sun

Leaf veins
the light

flows
enters
thought
speech

But the veins of
darkness
bleeding

so the quickening light
questioning

brightness of the web

flowing substance

flowing
turns returns

The morning's
clear frozen
sleep
depth of sleep
awakening new power
And beauty palpable
Clear light candor
form revealed
grace
light now
disclosed mystery of light
seen

Burning snow bright roofs

icy

light blue sky

bluish chimney smoke
midday

auras
sunlight very white thin clouds

sun glory

Numbed face breath smoke

Frozen tree

night

stars

up-raised hand

moonlight vapor

breath

this one life

The field the shining snow

Brown rushes lie almost flat
in the half frozen swamp

in the early evening
rain is melting old snow
and gray ice

clouds are the color of carbon paper

the air is sepia

three crows settle
in a brown willow tree

through stiff gray bushes
and through the cat tails

a warm wind blows

Wet morning garden path

leaves heavy

intense green
of grass

mist rain

cool air water
drips

down leaf

mist garden black wet soil

mist earth mist life

The waters
night mind
dim leaves shadows
on the floor
wind shapes
sleep too
and again
touch the deep well
mirror surface night
and again
talismanic night original night
of leaves
amulet fire
alchemy burnt pages of a dream

Blue green moonlight shadow veins

leaf pages blown

leaf hands catching at them

I shall run

through the dead night
of empty
soft listening

to find

I who must sing
the empty glass

which sinks through the eye

Find the strings
attached to my hand

the sounding harp
speaking its infinite voice in six strings

How he must bleed

sharp thorn of the water
and then swallow it

O the cool blood
as from a fish or a bicycle

The rock shall swim

the water write

the tree sing in the bright day

when she will come wild

through the door
opening in light
to ask
the hand to speak
to ask
the mouth to touch

Passages we step through
 gates and another shadow stone
 steps
the dark temple
pond mirror burning white autumn moon
 shining battered onyx water
 leaves of dim amber
 float in
 green moonlight
striped shadows
 on your face on your blouse
door of the tree limb
 another another door
 leading where

Eyes closed
and hot sun
afternoon

wind grass
breeze grass
yellow light green

yet silence

haze

see to the far edge

a white house gray barn

sun-flash of window

two chestnut trees dark

a red tractor

bright world

of sleep

face burned by the sun

Long hours afternoon

slow

listen then
again

moment of day the autumn

warm sun
as though the morning

still burning there

breath of

the air passing

window open curtains
pulled aside

sunlight warm upon a hand

Garden earth

handful
of dirt
very cool to the touch

Breeze rain
soaks in

root stem leaf what are they

what is sun

filling the sky high blue

white clouds

bright points
plus minus

shimmering across green water

sun infinite light

sky empty blue

never filled

Sun snow

Light

burning snowfields

white hill throbs in white day

dry-ice vapor valley

sky far up pale blue

no wind no sound

Meet me there

you know
 who you are

 you know where
silence

 after the rain

shaken leaves droplets on

your blouse
 off then

scent of damp earth

break this small branch

and pale flowers fall

heavy scent fills
 the air and

night damp sweet full of
rain scent and again

inhale
 exhale all every

particle night tingling

waiting silence

place a bower time forever now

again

honeysuckle yet no other face

jasmine

yet no other touch

This quiet summer

the garden

evening and the sun

slowly long shadows
bright grass

copper yellow-green

then the purple dusk

moths now

one very heavy brown horned
buzzing
near nearly black roses

others floss like ragged

electrons around white-blue
streetlights

trees simmer we walk

yellow roses

stir near the fence

a breeze picking up
rain coming

Shadow trees reach
pouring stretching
streams
in the light river
of sunset
gold orange bright dust cilia
shadow nets
net the sidewalk
things done here
known not known
we know who you are
twilight soon
and beyond
Sunset embers the green west
hills distant light opening
opening out
Space burnt out carbon
earth light tarnishing
world quiet still flocks of crows
wheel up calling
the fields around the edge of town

steps touch dark pages here

Silent sun

an eye no longer reading the world

words near darkness echo

words in darkness too

and carry far

I say this to myself to you

Leaf fall

and the water rains down
into my face

arterial roots
and ganglia fill

in the cold dark

overflow,

and the waters brim up
through the leaf rotting soil

earth fragrant and soft to the step

Come

breathe now rain silence

sudden light-
ning

night air

wet earth wet grass

asking and
asking

a smile a type of light

Plum branch with dark green leaves

rainy rainy tree

a few plums almost hidden

questions gathering

a scent a question
and an answering

fragrant damp night

Day

hot

no breeze a field

yellow sun yellow light

silence time

is

a cicada's humming light

sound a yellow field

heat noon

still

Near darkness

Sun eye

hill

eyelid

trees burning

sun yellow green light

sky void

long silent

Clouds

sky full of light
shapes and movement
radiant longing
halls of light far
farther

the green lawn now wet
burning green rain
tree limbs black extruded carbon
yet like a living arm
slant rays of sun
gold copper hologram
branch shadows
blood vessels sidewalk
wind
the leaves
ripple

Come this afternoon

down through walking
and we two just us

rows
of the garden

green light tatters of shade flaking

liquid dim green
light

sun and shade sun

and green yellow

and lighter darker green thoughts dream

there hot still

sun shadow bumblebees climb bright air

the wide eyed sunflower

tall bean vines
climbing bamboo poles still atmosphere

bumblebees come go

How old are you or I

Now they come
 humming digging in pea vines
bright burning white flowers
 louder a moment then away
 zoom near a second
disappear into light

Frozen branch
ice crusted around
glassy crystal
water light
droplets drips
each drop bright
sun inside
burning

My hands in dirt
 plant this

these the powers this
 of earth

Come come to

Come now

 this opening

the changing rain and sun

 of soil

 leaf and flower

take the seed

take the black dirt

take earth
take latent life

take powers

And rain now

through leaves
the ground with mist

how still in the air

drops of rain

rain mist

early June
early life
remember

deepest things

the green mint the grass the wet soil

Ripeness now

the trees

The corn the fields of

evening the sun

fallen

into night's silence

Light streams
 roots
of the trees
 light and air
 burning and
Then
 fallen wild autumn these
 the rain down
through the rain
 down through
 again

Edges mid-light
glare

The brightness
day rustle
beneath the afternoon

Shadows
silent breeze shadows
field-heat
radiance

The moving
 shifting light
 leaves
 almost

I feel
 the shadows move
 across my face

I dreamed

where the sun
winking through leaves
day warm and quiet
the grass
listening
breathing

New the night
of earth spring
a flooding
Ancient and new the night

Here

the path from before

summer

bees

in the sun

Eye sees the day

these the spaces
 of light

farther farther on

beyond blue

unchanging depth

of

elsewhere

sky beyond sky

Light water
 through tree

 limb space day

 beyond black wires blue

 light water a few drops
the puddles from last night still here

 someone calls from the house

 a backdoor slams

 sun
 still and sky

 in peripheral awareness
feel them so bright there as you run

Pole wires soft buzz
 hot bright day

Bright amber of hacked wood

 dabs of tar here and there

 metal spikes would-be rungs

at leg breaking neck breaking

 intervals go up there?

 telephone pole in blue air

with a huge sun and four small birds

Dense sun
 gold dusty light
 afternoon
piercing the tree crown more light
 the round green mushroom top tree
 like a sponge
 crannies of bright
 here and there
 seething in the still air
now and then a stiff breeze
 squeezes it
 and more sun pours through

Green pole beans sunny green in light
a white flower another
dense tangle of green
white butterflies in the air
Bright air

Heat sound in the
silence
green lawn
rose petals deep red
scattered on dirt
a cloud shadow passes

Light mist early morning
 red tea colored light

 across purple clouds

 across green rows of tomatoes
 peppers corn

 trees slate green

 an old man
 in grey overalls
 and a straw hat
 tilting a watering can

Early

early life

light from there

brightest light

ever seen

memory of day

One? Many? still green

Lightning

now

the rain

lightning

splits

the day

wind and hail

lightning

cold suddenly

lightning flash

time stopping

and wind rain rushing in to fill

the sudden earth vacuum

Neighborhood roofs

glare

Day

Brightness

luminous

empty

Floating clouds
on through
one and one and one
rounded backs
supplicants
in the sun
kingdom

I watch

where the day

is scored scratched

with shadows

The garden screaming
screaming with light
the day
has thrown shadow bars
around it

Night

so hot

we sleep on the porch
and almost no breeze

Black infinite sky
crowded with stars

sometimes one falling

Night so hot

talisman of suns
that burn below

Surge of air in the trees
bushes riffled through
cracking open

sealing shut
cracking open
again

then blown suddenly white
leaves all the wrong way

Light flashes through the sky

no thunder yet

but all at once colder

and the tree river flooding its banks
above around

rain lancing a window

And then

a kind of exploding
beyond sound
releasing
release at last

and now the downpour

Warm night

And water flow

Shower and kitchen faucet
and tea in a cold glass

the fan reversed in the kitchen window

drawing the cool air through
from front to back
in the railroad flat

Kitchen light out
but for a night light
above the stove

And you step through the amber rooms
your skin amber too

You have your jade necklace still on
nothing else though

Burning leaves

down the sun tree

October

touch each leaf

how the pond is filled with gold

Murmuring in flowers
 vines
the white scent

the warm light

the arbor sun

all afternoon
 white flower

at noon

Her form

penumbra

gold

whisper small splash

Known

even Time felt

her trace

dissolving

Archaic syllable

Morning's leaf

and each vine each flower's cup

at the tip

of rain the air

slowly slowly leaf

deeply

bent

and rising

Silences

cold air toward the sky

light at

my

feet

trees that hold

sunset boughs

rough bark

the wood paints over my shadow

lost my voice

The burning of light

dagger the open

that hides

the word uttered now

This cry the wall

this kindling desire

merest film

less than leaves

Drifting smoke of autumn fills

the air the burnt rim

of earth

deep sky most distant

stars

Here
with this shade

the air

forgotten leaves flowers drift

float

breathe in deeply soft

the face

deep memory

perfume far away

in time far in

Drift along

the deep grass drifting out

of night

sleep in this

world of light

put aside

primitive perfect

of many

Back porch

the night

scent

of mid-June grass

is perfume

stars through the leaves

in the wind

LIGHTSIGNATURES

THIRD BOOK OF ODES

The fallen
And scattered from the earth
Now
Light
crumbling bits
of the world
The sun's place empty

Fall

dark comes

when

over us

our steps sky star
shell

We walk upon
the leaf's web

of light

through the dark

Trees in the red

Light
we feel

frozen

breath like smoke

drop night's stars

in the well

In autumn
the earth
cobalt not the sky
empty space
then
brimming
stars
still
alone
The earthly fields

Where I have come to
the evening fall
out the sun
through the small green
late light sparks
of my stars
the green twilight

Late

smoke clouds

and freezing rain

the streets

skin of

branches

a street light

A falling past the light

around

the black street

is shiny

Given
to worlds
night
leaves of spring
moonlight
cracked and veined
and flowing stone-colored
of wind

Stem

leaf by leaf

August that brings

all

of

what the garden

the tangled
deep in

one

And then

silent noon silent noon

slowly

The path

all rain

and air

listen hear
 water dripping

perfect rain

of being

breathe

Sun

black

world burnt

hills

of clouds

bright poison sky

The earth darkening

Grass sun
 hay
 almost
 feel
 the wind
 noon
 soaks
 each blade

The dust road

gravel glittered sun

watery heat far off

above so dry

below my shoes the road

In the middle

I walked

how still

What is
being
sunlight
medium in which
The light
seek out
above around
currents of feel
of what is
And yet
let go

The sun
 bright field
 sleep of afternoon
 slowly
 deepening
 hot
 the air
 in time
 of day

Sun is quiet

So never cease
to some single sound
in the day
Felt in this
felt in light
for an hour
just this

Feel the
 night rain

tree surf wind

to know the sources

 rain beauty

 of lightning

's form

 dark-surface lightning-core

What

shading out

hottest sun

something then lost

found something

remembered

hands

hair

dark and

partial leaves

the dim well mirror

The water beads
streaming
skin
rose from
what rain-bath
But where my lips
waver
like a bee
the rose cannot be touched

Face close

to ground hair tips of grass

still field
sweet breath

of day

earth scent of green shadows

head down to

near there

breathe

Beans twine twist tangle
the stake light-rivers
flood wide deltas
of the leaf
that stretches wider
aching arching in sun
burns dead parchment by
autumn

Evening

and the garden

agitated

by the wind

the deep wind elsewhere

beneath the sunset plane

behind and beyond

the planes of light

under the door the cloud-hill crack

the burning traces

You sleep in the
 dim light
 a bedroom
 bright world shut away
 in the dark closet
of curtains blinds
 then suffused soft gold
 at morning
 Washed in light walls cry aloud
silently eggshell white
Hear do not
 hear
But stir
Do not look
 but see
 inwardly
Break the shell slowly

Beneath
August sun

Now here

the tall grass
lost in light

the fields staggering in wind

in the heat and a dry leaf

burned at the stem
flutters down still air

here

Morning

the breaking light

bright spokes put through
orange cloud

across still black
jade green fields

on still dim arsenic green
dusty spotlights of yellow

poured copper in the irrigation ditch

and in the black canal

a silver lorry on one road
misted in light

one red tractor moving in one field

Fragrant garden
ripened in the sun

White flower
in the light

The day is hot

Day bright
 high day sky

luminous aura

 day

 sky blue blue beyond blue

 bright nowhere

Still the night air
 this
scent that
 summer night is

so secret

 all your memories

 even you don't know

The breeze blows through
the night's sieve
stars are small seeds
in the pulp of darkness
huge summer tree arching upward
summer's fullest fruit
is the night itself

You come

in your white dress
that falls away

your body just visible
in the room

The
wind bright and

unseen

the day's sun plane

the day's blue
pond sky

lily pad islands

of cloud float slow
and slowly

tree ripples

wind currents

far deep in the blue

Light

sovereign

presence

silent majesty

unlimited infinite

glory

intangible yet all powerful

light nothing more than

light yet

beyond light

light beyond light

light merely

Bright razor of sun-silt
 beyond tundra-like fields

 amber pelt hills
 purpling dim

 now black trees
 craze the snow paths

frozen still

 and now real night

 edge time
 of the owl's feather

 where

F
ields of the snow river

flatly blazing high

sun

through

the empty

sky

blue erased script on snow

yet

aching bright

the radiant

blank page of sun

The field

simmers

in

its own silence

deep sunlight on grass

high grass so lonely

no path

White butterflies

light as paper bits

tumbling up

up their tingling

helix

in the sun

In the darkness

I only touch
stream pebbles

the stream can't be held

In my room
the walls are near

the light through
the window

neither near
nor far

Veins of
light leaf vein

(rippling

of my lung

stem and root
of earth

(shimmering bright

gathered in my spine

(water of the pond surface
full of clouds

Sun
sleep in the flower's

seed

stem and the root

 of earth

 Into being
the one

 brings itself at last
the sun

Dust
and dry
the ground
released
from
opening
closed cracked
fields seethe sifting
dry leaves and hay
are
knives sharpening on themselves
yellow land pale land where
water cannot flow
air dry and hot
winds blow
sky high white blue blue
empty sky day clear
from here
to where

Listening

near sleep

rustling

dry leaves moon water

poured through

summer moon hot and

big

black leaves shadow branches

like rivers of sleep

listening night music

earth drift swaying

so much

so much

going where

The grass

intricate shadow
a script

beneath
the sun the trees

the air the sky the high clouds

drifting

shadow cloth passing wiping the day

then gone day sky

opening again and more

changing a square of grass
to a plane of green light

shadow script erased

The sky

deep blue

wind bright intervals

between floating clouds

rooftops spark shine here there

bright floss drifts in bright air

the park then

and the flowing sun waterfall

green and faintly violet

in the steep tree gloom

The day

the field

high grass

light

sun flow

waist high

Midsummer

its dusty road

stillness

The sun hill

cold mist breath clouds
walking through

the green horizon

amber tree edge late light

slowly

the sun-void

beneath bridge

the river dark flow
snow-tufted

scrawled with grey ice at banks

below the hill
the sun river asleep

go find it now wake it

"I"

The wind-voices

I

water full of
light

the night spruce

the crumbling water-moon

Spring the leaves
new
light
long afternoon
and warm
haunted light deep
time-filled
but not past
but not future
radiant Now
streaming
through high piled clouds
yet haunted

Silence

of the
falling leaf

through
the silent day

The still clouds

in blue

pond sky

tree veined

float through

the sun

leaves follow tardy

Fields of snow

frozen light

white sun abyss high

and
pouring

echoing

aura upon
aura through

beyond
faint blue white white sky

Being is so thin here

radiant non-being

so full

Day warm

noon within

sun

bright

transparent air

White hatted gardener

bending through green shadows

grey glove metal flash

a cream wicker basket

noon

I eyes

almost closed

hot sun
 lashes

chest sun

brow leaf shadows

ear air

mind noon listening

Morning rain
flowers
leaves
all wet
heavy

Light's

empty

page

June rain

shoots

green

stems very light

black dirt soft warm

dry now

blue sky bright overhead

cumuli

filled with light

bees swerve in the air

The sun

all afternoon

cannot look at it

feel warmth see light

see the dark green plum tree
 galls on its trunk

crystallized amber dribbles
 down the bark

 roses smolder
 bright
 and dark at once

 gladiolas hectic
 hot pink

there are bright points
 in the air

The time

Now late summer

sleeping

in heat silent the

fields green

corn so high and green

wheat wind paling brushed amber

hay fields yellow white and the wind

flowing through

opening them to more light

day

active burning

Surface

water flow

seed earth

change

flower rain

wind change

change

light cloud

halls

peaks of emptiness

so far so high

change

Sun and
light wind high
fathoms of cloud caverns
guy wires curtains of light
blue of sky spaceless
dimensionless
ringing
the chords of light
deep and
silent

EARTHFRAGMENTS

FOURTH BOOK OF ODES

Where do you go

green time rain filled
say

far into which day

so the light so
the cloud shale

so the cool wind

brown leaves blown

hair where when

that day

Banks of

light
deep in the sun pond

far in the convex
of blue

"Here" shimmers

Pond blue iris

cataract lily pads

Sun swan

Branch ice

spider web

ice coated
shining

sun capillaries
veins

sun heart beating

bright loud and loud

through the sky

Sun
beyond the burnt edge

light ash
 on steep hills

the sun vortex
 funneling down

the earth's throat

Midsummer grass
 yellow green

 the wave of the wind
not one many waves smaller
 eddies

gathering small breaking

 wind streams

currents the grass lake

 ripples of hay

 sun pulse
nearly white sun pale sky

 heat shimmer at
 the dark tree shore

 day so hot and dry

A pinecone drops
straight
through the pine boughs
taps the dirt
quietly
the sandy smooth dirt
Earth tap
so clear a sound
in the day
you think I will go that way
you feel the ground

Night clouds are
 dusty blue but
 the moon is white

the breeze very faint

 like sugar pouring
 through the trees
 that pillar up high

sand stars float in the sky

 and we look up
 from where we are
dark leaves grown in your cheek
 and on your eye

 and on your chest
 dark branches
with two soft buds

Seven roses later

anniversary

I am with you

(and always will be)

there

where one flower

has grown from two roots

one mind

from two voices

one shadow

from two different sunlights

She stands in
the room's space
bright green leaves
outside
happen to be
stands here the light's
half circle
pale lemon
and her shadow on the wall
Stands there
the dust the floor
Her hair not gold but
so
only one time to be here
only one time to see

Sun monstrance

burning clouds like marble

the radiant hosts

invisible

Earth of sky

trees mountains
hills of sky

hanging down from

but not down

Roads of sky

not hanging from
open to

Waters rivers rains of sky

coming from
returning

No longer sky of earth
but instead

earth of sky

The time clouds flow

silver

blue high sky

hot sun the day

bright mystery

Green your heart

daylight fills the bowl

where the sun swims

deep in the ripples

elusive

burning blue

How to find it?

Three leaves float beneath

gold leaves copper and red

suspended

eaten with small holes

ragged

yet green your heart

An acorn with a few leaves

wet with the rain
on the wet grass

beside the mud beneath the

huge tree
crown still dripping

What small small things

Green sky
 east
 breaking sun yoke
 the fire hills

Violet sky
 west
 dust speck stars
 gray surf of trees

Slowly quickly
 long shadows
on the path
 of pant leg and sneaker

gold grass filling
 with streaks of light

The leaf sun
branches of sky

sun of many
many suns

light clarity

outward everywhere

not one sun only
but one and more than one each day

like leaves
or bright spots
in the pond

world of many worlds

sky of many skies

too high
too full of light

to be just one

Tree shape
of rain rain sheath around
rain tapping
batting down trough
and spill
through
roofs of leaves
to the puddles on the low grass
and bare ground
Scent of rain water and leaf
of wet earth
the fields drifting here
in the wet air
in the needling breeze
splash spritz essence essences
lifting us
into the air
to feel
dim green
Ascend the twilight ladder
green shape of shade
and just outside and around
filled with rain sound
and rain sounds
is more rain

Green violet air
not dark

Light leakage

edges fields around houses

ray shot depth
pin point sun far in

fir boughs
leaves in layers nearer

Light injection

into Now

shapes open from dark
to twilight

dimensions fill
suffused

breathe

see the sky now
see the trees

Radiant king

from total darkness

from below the hill
the field the road's end

from the mountain's back

from the ocean's fury

from the earth's far edge

where all might perish

from the dead land itself

from sleep

Radiant king

A corn field at evening

the landmark oak tree
back lit in a sun cube

crystal cross sections
of slanting light
hold the world still

and yet it cannot be held

swallows flow through
as though sucked in by a vacuum

around and over and up
then gone

the corn shifts and wavers
in the breeze
inside itself it is burning

clouds move through the sky
constructions of sooty bronze
and stained marble

What is being sought
by these lives
these powers movements?

Where will it end and how?
And who will know it?

while the sun cuts through the world
in a moment again and again

creating destroying revealing

Wheat field
 in dawn light
 moving
 in the wind that moves over you

Wind from the sun
 in the first of day what do you feel

 in the movements of rain
 your stems and roots

Motions of wind
 eddies like quick wood shavings
 in the golden moiré and grain

shimmer of currents here there gone

 now in the strange light
as though at the beginning of human time
 no different

 Now
 the earth crack
opened
one centimeter and the outside
 come streaming in
 cosmic light and time
known here touching us

Flowers
 on the pea vines
the bees' curve toward
then partial helix
 up
 hesitant swerve
closer around
now hover
a moment now
galaxies spiraling
 through unimagined distance
the sun white luminous funnel point
where tidal waves
 volcanic flows of radiation
 that could drown Hiroshima's
 fire lake
 what word for this

Three bees rummage together
in one white pink flower

looking close
translucent white capillaries
net the sunlight
there is no skin so fine

by chance
in another corner

two cabbage whites
tatter upward

tingling to nowhere

Day garden silent

sky sun still

clouds

just

slowly increasing

come quick breeze and rain

so hot so dry

soak down gray dirt

toad limping off there

bean leaves

have a curled yellow fringe

but should be all green

on the hard smooth path

dust glitters like filings

Bright snowfields
 the river frozen
 knife scar
down the valley's face

sun-fields of sky

 blinding

 sun fields of earth

 and the road not visible

Midnight

dark trees
wet
trunks clear
in headlights

leaves down
October

the green
moonlight

Evening

the cold now the air
 filled with

the sky emptiness

deep frozen blue

yet with green a little

light leaving
the world
disappearing

small differences degrees

as when a person very near
to death and then

is dead

soon now total night

Fallen sun
 burnt
 char of hills

tarnishing clouds molten light

 sky burning away

darkening west edge scorched abraded

 the end of day unnoticed

 darkness now

 strangers the others seen

 just barely

and secret
 who you ask the wind

papers leaves scraping
 and where

 night of the tiger the panther

 night of wind hyenas

 yet original night

Snow fall night
 time fall

drift outward
 elsewhere

 space and time

freezing fear each day
 greater

 stranger

fallen here when yet remember

earlier so long light cards
 light tokens signatures
 collected held

the message in these creases
 these lines
 what will happen

rock print grain of wood

 consider

and the other saying words
 giving signs

in fear of what will happen

Frozen

and the night
no beginning no end

winter stars

myth tigers

grant immortality

I spit
and it is frozen already
immortal crystal

the wakeful present breath vapor

the bomber's vapor trail

against orange green sunset

light incision into light

fabled life forgotten
sold as soon as born

genital mutilation
and yet forgotten

though remembered in secret script

Sun above snow

white hills
 of dry-ice

phosphorous vapor in light haze

the river
 cannot be seen

Gather the cloak of leaves

do you need this
the wind says
the water the air

earth leavings light leavings

gather unused but not forgotten

on your stair

wrap the counterpane of stars
up in your dream
put it away there

use it someday

somewhere

Green valley
yellow sun haze
peach colored dawn
light cocoon
the valley is wrapped in
pea green hills set forth
for three corners
stitched with bright roads

Leaves

to the covered
earth

now dissolving

rain bleed

so many colors
never seen elsewhere

white smoke over all

fire smoke frankincense

acid in the cold air
the time beneath mist

with luminous ropes and figures
smoke tangles
your face

slowly pull free

Stones from the rain bed

water marks of dim green
and slate

from the field hollow where
dews collect

from the wind and hail
and from hundred degree suns

where the wind filed with sand
with soil with water
with just itself

where you would hear
molecular tingling of wind on stone

silicate graphite quartz

bright names like edges
where light glints and glances

edges where no name can stick

surfaces where no word adheres

corners that turn back every gaze

I am I have been the stone says

You must look elsewhere

Bright green sky orange horizon
sky of gold and opal cloud
above the sun
half sun disc
a molten coin half way down a slot
nearer us streaming
scorched cloud vortex
underlit tatters
What part of the earth
is burning now?
Blinded I ask When shall we see it?
When shall we see it all?

The blackened world

light burnt

is sealed
silent

silent the surface radiance
the apparent plane

of being

Absent now
the overpowering sun

and yet I still am blind

Buildings glimmer
thin and insubstantial
liquid at their edges
in the ravening sunset
merest outlines sketches
in the quenching night

in the faces drifting
floating in the aftermath

to whom can one speak to whom listen

World listening

empty speech
rustling
dry leaves faces

strangers who approach announcing
listen be silent saying

paper burning
books cities

Where known not known

feel the earth drift where when
colored lights

mind script
how to grasp help me to know

and fall away finished
the ancient stories
vendible and the physician

Now something else is rising
invisible motion
silent gathering

darkness teems the possibilities

when a different life
a different earth

The serpent

stump roots

reaching through the soil's
dark

dream of the tree

they once drew out so far
in echoing concentric layers
of ring on ring

that sailed so mast-like
through the bright and hectic winds

that reached so far up

searching
for the dark roots of the sun

the
buried roots

sea-phosphorescent

synapses still unstill

in their night-filled
earth dreaming skull

can feel the rising tide pull of the moon

bright touch

and weightless
shadow harp string ripples

as powdery as moth wing dust
of moon's glow
in green amphitheaters of leaves

Steps

so crushing heavy
of the shadow realm

steps

yet empty, weightless

of another world rising
through this world

drawn up

through dark passages

The grass

clover with white

italic shadows too

and trees around hang darkly into

the green space

of sun

sun pool

warm bright air currents
floss-moted light cuts
through tree boughs
a few leaves ripple

Close eyes now sun face shining

feel brightness of day

passing touch of air
cool slight friction

feel soft rough cool grass waxy

earth smell of green

warm air sun breathing
grass points in your ear

The time of the sun wind streams
 through gold grain fields

hot breeze near the road
 small stones at the shoulder
 shining gray white

Hear the day heat in the field
 near the white farm house
 above flower beds

burning air

dark tree shore beyond the fields
 slight wind surging still there

yet even there heat shimmer through
 the air like gasoline fumes

no rain coming now
 blue skies of no cloud
 and no rain needed only

sun burning in roots
 sun in stems sun germ

sun leaves of apple trees
 cherries peaches the tomatoes
the green broad translucent lettuce leaf
 the beans vines
 bright fields of clover
burning corn rows at noon at dusk

Now see three brown horses graze
 in a field of blazing yellow grass
the aluminum water trough flashes

The rain that evening
 came on
 after hours of humid preparation

the air was airless, stifling close

housework or garden work
 or just walking

 were all sweating occupations

it was impossible to dry off from a shower

it seemed that everything was damp

there was a tackiness on desk
 or kitchen table top

even the onion's paper coating
 didn't crackle when you peeled it off

something weighed heavily on things
 the air was tropical and torpid

yet all was charged with some unseen
 activity

I felt it in my skin and all along my spine

Then after long preludes
 of ashen sooty clouds
 and then low bruised-looking clouds

 the storm broke through

thunder like a dropped cookie sheet
lightning
then silence
when the air was poised
then the splitting of worlds
the lightning's current lit
the dark mist waves of clouds
black and gray mist waves
spilling over each other
a spark struck through
the charged processes haphazardly amassed
then the rain itself came
veils and blown curtains of gray rain
and wind
churning and hurrying treetops
snapping branches off
the rain pounded rapping violent and loud
like potatoes being emptied on the roof
or sand and pebbles on the windows rushing
steadily
The world was now more damp
and yet vaguely charged
it had become power
and everything was vibrating

bathed in power
 an energy came on down through in waves and
 troughs
 like a surf or like a fire
 then, though more quickly than I would have
 thought,
 it ebbed and died away
 After a while, cooler in the lighter air,
 we breathed again
 and moved about more easily
 How many things are clearer after rain,
 a clarity to breathe
 and clarity to live within

Summer made
 the pea vines bees

 flowers

 in the sun light

 Touch leaf or stem
 soft petal of vascular light

 summer made the flower's scent
 of sweet rain
 wind
 light made bees their hum
 bright flight of gold
 made
 grass water flowing
 cool warm clear from green hose
 and faucet
 to peppers corn and beans

 the plum tree high and dark green
 and light made

The dark light
in cells oxygen
of rain water light
drops of
glucose as intravenous
the leaf light vessel
stretches
to alter
the web
so much depends
on the how on where when
on these
small hidden things

Very early now

green stems of rain light
water paths of the
bean shoot carrot

onion here the sun soil
with night crawling

flood of shiny black mud

worms for fishing the stream
light yellow rocks light web
at ten feet nearly pea green water

in the early morning mist on the bay

the water's blooming as my uncle said

Very early now basil bush here
fragrant on your fingers

with dots of bright rain
lady's earrings

Sun

high above snow

hills

sky

clear

no wind

no sound

snow dust

blown away in air

Standing in the garden feel wet air
leaves breathing early morning
leaf breath I'm breathing too
inhale water air into
lung leaf
stretching leaf spine
my arms stretch wide mouth open
capillary leaf pattern webbed and
rippled with veins of movement
and in the pond
three gold fish breathing
water light

Season of the falling leaf

and sun-fall too at evening

slanted light through boughs
across the tanning and
ploughed-over fields

the gold green hills in the middle
distance
charged with a startling clarity

and weightless a moment
in the orange and mercurochrome light

cross sections streaming through the
backlit oak

sight lines converging somewhere out
beyond
the burning porthole of the low sun disc

we see so deeply now
earthly life implying something more
and yet what more

And sunlight

Signifying what? you say
of what quality?
or simply what is light?

and every day
on table chair
across the tiled floor

on the cream colored tiles
pale brick and steel
of the dormitory complex

making a blue soap bubble reflection in
a deep bay window

flashing like a signal mirror on
parked car windows down the blazing city
street
high high windows where it seems to
shimmer slightly gold

on the razor wire and metal gate of the
expensive apartment building

on the still sheet of mercury that is
the entire side of a bank

or else we see it
in the clouds themselves that float so
freely over head
inhabitants of the open blue
and of that thin blue white
beyond the blue and

in the cloud reflection in the bright
office window

where the roped and hanging window
washer
places his long metal arm

Windows in rain waterfalls
 slides down the blue gray
 of the day the dim green
the trees like blotches of lichen
ragged whitish stone green stalagmites
 but furry looking misted as
 though they'd been frozen
set in motion with a tattered stiff
 waving like someone waving a
 broken wrist say
 very dim
as though remembered as much as seen
the town is full of fog horns now
 traffic sizzles past
streaks of traffic lights
in the wet glass
on the fire escape rain water
 the drops very clear
 although from a smoky sky
are battering the red geranium
 its pot is overflowing
 and drops hang in a row
 some more gravid and others less
from the black chipped fire escape rail

Rachel

in the bright light

at the edge of the world
the sun so hot the confusing day

and voices in the light
speaking calling shouting

dust in the air gray ochre

the open spaces
of the desert and yet
not open not a
desert "there" we say

"over there"

and others "home"

But at home

what does one do
What does one do feeling at home
to the other also there

In the bright light standing with no
shelter
against the voices
refusing to hear refusing to not see

You stood and stand now

Young tree

You cannot be uprooted

(Rachel Corrie, 1979-2003)

Hot today still air

 no cars around the park
is empty

 midday although

shouts from the children's wading pool

 a block away

 fragrances near the flowering shrubs

open the window to take them in
 and not just to know

 to feel the day and not merely see

 to hear feeling knowing
what is in the voices calling in the
 light

even though some sit here on the
 benches
they yet have their window closed

Sun beyond earth edge

twisted hills with buildings
frayed end of charred fabric

light barely reaching
through crimson saffron and green

we here watching

Cold wind turns leaves bronze
think of it soft crazing of skin
at eye corner inside of elbow
gray hair in pubis

and your new daughter
purchased from China

the slit throat
blood spattering trousers like paint
action painting of the hierarch

where there is gold there is blood

the severed head eyes closed

these are portents

The illusions given
 worlds withheld by the dream

 the images

 tunnel of memory
 mind-script

the announcers saying listen be silent

 archaic syllables of ancient texts
 blazing portico of sunset
 the great gate of night

black leaves of the night tree

leaves painted with yellow moonlight
 gold leaves and amber

 see them floating in the well
gather them they are precious

dive through the bright surface
 the oil slick of dreams

fill your shirt breast with them then

Carried back long afterward
 late evening of your journey

for exhibition in public places

Late spring night full of
wind-blown trees
new leaves snapping and
chattering wild
already thick
green and yellow green
and lit a silver gray in the flowing
moonlight
moon that parts from clouds like someone
taking off her robe
Moonlight the green moonlight
on my hands
and grass is painted almost black
by shadows on the lawn

Spring's million rains
drops sheets buckets
emptied from the roof
clear web flowing around one
black wrought iron rail where
stretched between two pineapples
a luminous ventricle pulses
icicles of falling water
bright spitballs cast up like a welding
torch
these from three different eaves
while windy rain comes down
through half leaved trees and full
that wave and wave
shall we say wildly ecstatically
as it lances through them
and trickles down their bark
itself full of grass of fields nearby
flowers weeds are in it
water from the rivers lakes
mountain streams are here and every
little creak
all contributing
in some way this is them
in some way this is everything
but wait

Lightning etching down somewhere
and the expanding air cracking
crackling with formless energy
new life insubstantial unfixed
as of yet

Light streaks
on the water's surface
the river shows mercury apartment blocks
a warehouse
a river walk with its tall streetlights
part of a parking garage
light crinkles are splashed over it
from the wind that raises
bruises of darker water
and tree rings of ripples
It is green water overall
mud tinted but clean
the day still clear enough for
reflections
with its high intense blue sky
grassy spring air
and small puff cumuli here and there

Paths

under the apple trees

in the autumn rain soaked grass

 windfalls all around some

 are slick-mashed

 the air has a clean taste

These apples no one eats

 they are crabs

 small red streaked with white

 quite sour

 yet even if not good to eat

 they perfume the air

one particular morning after the rain

 I still remember

saying
 the tree
 must be burnt to its final ash
 remnant of ice and the last stars
 drift in the tree bark

Where you hear
the final pages rustling so fast
even though it is the wind
so fast to elude the fire itself
as they burn

like the man on the large screen
in the movies music
is the best thing though
they always say
where the word must starve
but the music man is rich
that country
what was its name can't remember
can you hum it

snow is always falling here

but the face
of the burning man is melted
sunk below this pool of snow water
here in your palm

where the rivers part around
the ice flows turn backward
can you grasp them

and so deep inside the tree trunk the
book
was burned at last
pages and all
and the tree in the steep pomegranate
light of dawn
bore its first crop of stones
the smooth polished stone of silence

The plum
 ripened slowly on the branch
within
 sweet juice
 fluent full
 ripeness
 heat of summer days
What is the plum?
 ripeness?
A point of world where energies converge?
 A sacrament of day?
if I took the plum and opened it
what rivers streaming gold
what suns
what skies what heavens and
 what fires?

Sunrise

burning up of space

converges

to this partially stilled point

ash condensing to become

a dense crust

earth

centripetal eddy whorl of ash

in the river of fire

sunrise

And then the fine filigree

root and stem and leaf

Sunset

moment of earthlight
a single drop condensed in a petal
flower of opened space
showering its pollen
of a million suns
over and over
a million worlds
these stars
settle like dust motes in the
aftermath
golden grained ephemerata adrift
in the wind of being and non-being

Glass -

what was made in the fire
retains the fire

though cooled to this clarity

and stilled in this light

this sphere of glass

frozen globe of flame

shattered to ice crystals

it melts in the blower's breath

it catches the fire
runs

and is molten once again

for he has breathed his spirit into it

fire calling to fire
to burn, to flow once more

Apples red pears peaches

dusty black grapes

cool water from a glass gallon
kept in the whitewashed stone cellar

string beans from the vines
in a metal colander

a green cardboard basket
with a curved wicker handle
dirt flecked on its side
filled with red tomatoes

a small glass of pink wine
tarty and sharp
made two falls ago
here in this back yard

The deep

snow

fell all night

early morning not white but quieter

but where this window showing

one tree patched with bandages
soaked cardboard limbs
white brows and epaulets

air still dark like bilge water

opposite window then
find the pearl
light blooming through watered milk
silver

point trees

roots trunks eaten away
as though unfinished

feather brocade lowered and lowered

world of silence

Open road now

the rain comes on
sun shower at first

sun winded over with silver clouds

they bloom off to white shining again
but still rain and then

more colder now
get a drop on ear in eye

don't see or hear the same
cap tapped down on
two or three times more
fat drops this time (one on wrist)

crossing the field

we have some mud from last night
stomp right through don't worry

facing into the sun
streaming
straight on we have to go
we have to hurry

shadows reach out back of us
and from a row of trees
the brown grass tinted
we climb the tiger's fur

and white peas of hail come down

A white barn

 a gravel road beside it curving
 the small stream farther on

inside

 the special dark the tools
the metal tines hanging leather
 lanterns rakes and brooms
stalls for the animals silently there
 in one stall a bull

A corner turned

 see the tall hay loft
 bales above
 a pond of loose hay below

a stream of light slants across

 from one unseen wall
 hay pieces floating in it very still

but yet the waterfall of hay

 the children jumping down shouting
 to each other from the stream of light
 into the loose hay laughing

With willows
 and white benches

the shore walk
 hangs into sky

three gulls tuck themselves
 more tightly

 cold ripples spread
 wind water roughs gray

 a center of still blue
 though
 with green willows
 and three white clouds

 what will we do when it is really
 winter

when we are old alone
 and cannot pay

Stranger no one knows me

I go wherever wandering

white dust road
white sky yellow hay fields

Later the wind chilled
rain burned me

Lightning fires in the west

The world full of smoke

down so many bus routes

Highways the dark cabs
of the eighteen wheelers
lights sweep inhabitants
the color of cement

Can one pick wild berries?
In the shade of a fir tree
drinking from a can
I wondered this

Dawn bedroom

wooden window casing
and dark green curtains
hanging a little off
one of them stained

the wooden bedroom floor
always a little dusty

books piled here and there
a couple of half empty bottles
one scotch one vodka in a side cabinet

leaded book cases in one wall
but way way past their prime

we're three floors up
two windows have screens
one does not
merthiolate sun rays angling in
through a window shade tear
a shade is the tan color
I associate with the sails of junks

You never use ash trays
just cans or paper cups
and two such cans are on the floor
beside the book you set face down

the green cape of one long curtain
trails inward in a breeze

it is frayed around
its pseudo William Morris hem

And yet it is a beautiful moment anyway

dirt has collected inside the sill
we ought to keep the place a little
cleaner

it was a beautiful moment anyway
as I've already said

you lying still asleep in bed
and the early light suddenly clear
letting one see the building opposite
really to see it
not just to know it's there

the spring air blowing in
and yes it is the spring
beautiful moment when we suddenly
unexpectedly
just see

In the green light

underneath the leaves

arbor aquarium light

and straighter light

bored through

the old board slats

you come and go zebra striped

by the wire trellis

the dirt floor

crowded with grape shadows

our feet could tread shadow wine

imagine being drunk on that

reach me the dark cup

one day but not now

for now we're sitting here

in the arbor light

it is not sepia yet but will be

the benches are old

white at one time

paint mostly gone

it looks like news shreds

the old grapes twine up and around

grandfather planted them

perhaps to rejoin one's ancestors

is the great thing after all

grape clusters here and there along the

canopy

brown purple in the twilight

Rake

all the vines together
in a pile

it is the autumn now
we must prepare
colder the
mornings sun mist frost
in the air

Tomatoes bean vines
pepper plants cucumber zucchini
the summer's yield
this was a living climate

Vines and leaves and roots
it all must go
be burnt up
in the middle of the garden
scraped raked together
with dry fallen leaves
quite unceremonious
a world is over

Matches

fire catching
from a lit scroll of news
crannies of orange at first
liquid the flame translucent

then spider hollow burnings
flaming catacombs tunnels
matted jungles webbed with sparks
stick forest furnaces of ash

then from the mound smoke streams spread

smoke vortex
thick choking yet fragrant

breathe the intoxication of true ending

even as a boy
 home for the day from school
in my old evening work clothes I used to
 love it

I saw the massing storm clouds
building high
in a gray slow-turning thunder head
orange lightning flashed, blinking
in the deep of the cloud-hollow
the pumice colored rim lit, and lit again
afterward the trees and power lines
were down along the avenue
a great oak tree snapped off at the base
the three foot trunk ripped and splintered
like a stick

The coded speech of stars
the underlying eloquence of midnight air
the telling power of the steady breeze
of strong wind
and the untold alchemy of storms

Sun of late afternoon

growing larger light growing complex
tinted
and yet the lit clouds nearest me
strangely near

how directly my sight knows them

how far is it from here to there
it cannot be very far

thunderhead capitol
drifting evolving structure
out of structure

shining so whitely

harboring caverns of sheet lightning
far within

a parallelogram of light
combs aslant
through all these changes

marking an alien region
the clouds themselves must flow through

Constant movement in the sky
of winds and clouds
Day makes an open
unobstructed field
for the light and motion of the cumuli
to be displayed in
it is the splendor of light and of
movement
in their starkest forms
the glory of visibility
the raiment of divinity is here without
divinity
with nothing but these
elements and space
the empty sky

Afternoon

September and

a yellow field near the highway

the special sunlight of this time

it cannot be described

part summer part autumn
filled with both

and therefore more than full

richness beyond

richness beauty more than beauty

and yet empty

one white butterfly is here

milkweed in the light

the sound of traffic

The autumn
lives in fire
the suspicion of flame
in the morning ice
the puddle catches daybreak
the red maple tree
burning in wind
clouds move through flame
at evening bright orange and opal
sky fire
earth tinder of black hills
the woods blazing at midday

Full
of their own
burning passing
 now
as though
 ready
 existence
seething in its own
poise
 contradictions
the leaves
 flowers fruit
in its ripeness
clear being of many facets
seen beside me in this sky
 these ripples

But now
you can have
your accustomed face again
(but how?...
despite so many
hours days years
--has it been?)

Please don't allow
rain drops (or tears)
on this empty pane,
on pain of –

(--Oh, some things
let's not speak of.)

PACIFIC RIM

The World as it Is (San Francisco)

Here

my hand
something
working through me

past me

business of men of women
of appointments with

these times elements

Plant place let it go

a seed that is
or toss it to the water

Chained mailed ocean pewter-colored

wind bruised light greened
effervescent wave glitter

here there

there is work being done
and to be done everywhere

Light day weather we say
the world

who then why and when
circumstances
often these have been seen
often told
the rain and the sun
wind from the ocean
white-gold light cracking open
through banked winter clouds
and the bridge
weightless in new light
delicate looking
almost like a confection
or something fired in a kiln

A Street (Vancouver)

And after the rain
the air
filled with green and light
I have seen felt walked before
but not breathed
yellow flowers in puddles white petals
and some small seeds or stones
Looking breathe live
moment is knowing moment
tree drip eyelid plink
the hedge of trapped rain so fragrant
the small yellow flowers so real

I Think of The City (Los Angeles)

I think of the city
in the day and in the night

numbers motion

stuttering light
blinking blinking blinking

like film frames
through the concrete overpass

numbers moving rhythm

the lunar bareness
of the deserted parking lot at dusk

fluorescent saucers
thirty feet off the ground
buzzing softly

a youth come out
to gather shopping carts
pushing them back
leaning forward into them head down

pale lemon light on the eggshell surface
of some industrial chemical tank
the metal stairs and rail
graphing up around its curved side
but casting no shadow

City Walk (San Francisco)

Sun over office building
blue sky windows
the seated window washer
has his squeegee
on a burning sun hole
and a white cloud both at once
Down here rows of gingko trees
each with a metal ring around its plot
dry soil within
clay pipe pale some fallen leaves
arcade of bright yellow paper
aquarium light
torn through with sun
the enclosing rocking movement of the shadows
sitters with splotched face
or dappled dress
one or two eating lunch

Wasting Time (Seattle)

Tree's shade

afternoon

near a parked car

goldfish bowl of windshield

holding upside down trees

second story

beauty shop dance studio

pieces of cloud

car mirrors car windows car roofs

flow through

side of a white moving van

helmet of motorcycle rider

female rider too

with a thick swath of dyed copper hair

all transparent full of light

rise from the depth of the city

then flow away

leaving chalky splat of bird droppings

a yellow leaf pear-amber spotted

and a lime green leaf

Pause (Seattle)

October leaves fluttering
 each a kind of barque
 small craft warnings
 typhoon perhaps

And in the boathouse
 the moon so big
white above amber stones
 strangely shallow bottom
 crisscrossed
with string bags
 of yellow light
 moonlight

Close the doors father said
 or the moon
 will pull us out into the bay

but the swallows barn swallows
 were there
dipping down into the clear cold water
 and they got in the way

That was a dream toward morning
 the room adjusting to light

 incrementally the subtle tide
don't bother to leave the bed
 just stay here a while

A Map (Seoul)

October sun tree-filled
fiery angels
drop blazing parchment leaflets
traffic keeps me to this side
closer then
and they've vanished
just surging straining tree roots
in another instant all dead
the trunk frozen
like a pillar
Day so quiet around despite traffic
lost already
litter of dropped leaves
each palm sized lying flat
as though to become a new hand
forsythia yellow
darker regions here there
are Bosc pear tan
green routes
leading into those
mountain areas perhaps
a crescent of amber freckles
a string of towns
forest preserves it might be

fine grain of minute crosshatching
a script no a weave
the map not like ours
but some sort of garment too

here travelers have marked rest stops
spider web cracks and capillaries
are canals for barges
highways perhaps
small rust-edged cigarette burns
here and one there
are worm holes through to the sun

Lunch Break (San Francisco)

Sun fountain

spraying up a maple tree
three luminous ones in the park

October the real fountains
not yet turned off
cold silver water
like seltzer sprayed up

wetting the walk way's armpits
a dark arch here
another there
stone path chalky and dry

lunch bags scarves sunglasses
then of all things
a couple necking right there

Walk around to give them privacy
and across the lawn

Then
leaf shadows speaking
as we walk into them
bough shadows very long fingers
feeling the cloth of the light

spines of a fan spreading wide
the tree's light-sail to elsewhere

Spell (Taipei)

Blue autumn evening
 blue light
smoky and cold
 scent
of burning fields
 at the far edge of town

Where am I ?

way lost in a foreign city

But there's a street light moon
 heavy bright

 huge in the gapped *rong* tree
that's vacant looking like an empty hive

 places where the cold wind
wore through v's and ragged patches

leaf tatters hang
 like stuffing come out
aerial roots are like old wires

thicker trees up ahead very black

sidewalk in rusty light
 is a square and a square
 and a square

of pralines
 or something delicate

and now I see the moon
and the street leads up toward it

a lemon drop sucked by the dark
tree face
the wind is wreathing

Moving (Taipei)

Morning
in the city

cars trucks buses
the subway corridors in space

in time
shapes cut out
facets the city becoming diamond
it glitters brightly in the light

from the river the bridges one

pumpkin colored at dawn one now

celadon perhaps the light just so flooding

Water so filled with green
and spreading rings of foam

shielding my eyes
I watch it from the window
spattered with sandy grime

bright yellow light
beams and spotlight circles
flood the bus window
as we pass the edge of some building
white pumice colored with a pink
and magenta add painted onto it
for something

Late Spring Rain (Taipei)

Air steamy warm

a drizzly mist hangs in the air

aerosol air but fresh

full of green and
damp not wet with earthy scents

surf spray air but not prickly
and needle pointed

gentle soft

Mist hanging mist drizzle air

soft gray at a distance just a bit

Did I ever breathe before I wonder

Did I ever see such green

as the wet grass beside the river walk

the river deep gray green cold
and flowing fast
and filled with amber and brown tints

Large Flowering Bush

Large round bush

as tall as a man
full of white flowers

fragrant now
a very deep and strong perfume

the cool damp air
carries it so well

is full of rain water
glistens

catching light

Sun just now come out

through yellow bright tarnished clouds

Hard spring rain

brought down white petals all around it
littered on the ground
as though after a wedding

Diner (Taipei)

Silent street except the all night diner
 (they actually have one)
 aluminum cube

three placards of light
 clear slightly green
 like white Bacardi in the bottle
 motorcycles parked outside

 walking up
 still raining a little

 are we drunk?

 (two Chinese sages
outside the third sage's house one night
 decide to sing to him...

Where is the moon? –

 and the first step

 up

 (they'd been drinking...

 windows steamed a little
 semi oval of condensation
 on the doors

 rumbly talking
 piece of a waitress flashing by

leather jacket coffee cup
 shoulder pony tail

(like all of these...

Can't hear the music much outside

but now

Hugely loud

Bright yellow juke box
 (good people I guess

Is this Taipei?

Evening (Taipei)

Your third floor walk up
an old house on an old side street
its front porch
overlooking a park with huge *rong* trees

You made rice noodles and *dofu*
in your tiny box-like kitchen
your roommate was gone that night

a bit too hot no air conditioning

you brought
sweet lemonade in coffee cups

What did we talk about?

Your uncle was a monk you said
and you wanted to visit Australia one day

you didn't know what to do
after your degree

Sunset was tinting
the tiles of your kitchen wall

in the living room your bookcases
were bathed in living light
sparkling dust along one shelf

a kind of listening there between us
silent for a moment

there was a question
involving so many things too many
and then

you started to talk about something else
not abruptly
not in the way I'm phrasing it now
but just quite naturally

On your porch sipping coffee afterward
the trees at night were huge dark shapes
the full moon
bright and battered looking
shining over them

peach colored lanterns
on the other side of the street
a stray dog sitting in the road

City of Light (Taipei)

Bright day

reflected off a thousand surfaces
car windows chrome

aluminum awnings over shops
parking meters traffic signs

day is light and facets of light

traffic is beads of sweat
streaming down the city's face
it glistens along silver wires
toward downtown
a magnesium bright
calcine pool that crinkles
sparkling

The city turns sunlight
into steel and glass
cool white tile
and so much else
even the river
is brighter than the sky
greener than the hills themselves
filled with
long white tracks of boats
incisions quickly healed
like jet contrails in the sky
or zippers undone
but closing seamlessly

Huge Evening (Taipei)

Half molten sun

below the edge of roof tops

spill of bronze and mercurochrome in the river

late evening's

dense planes of light

space so deep now

clouds yellow green

radiant light

infinite space

beautiful city

Now white walls look tarnished

palm trees sift for gold in the air

find it lose it find it

houses

are burnt sugar cubes

not yet dissolved in tea

cars dark beads crowding

the intersection stoplight

an abacus

some slide through

others stay

headlights on now
cars are fencers, bright foils contending
the whole town glitters
at the end of day

Don't be in such a hurry
you want to tell everyone
some things are counted but some aren't

Old Song (Taipei)

When autumn leaves...

autumn leaves a song

your face ringed with soft light

I think of it

in the tea cup

light gold like warm sun

a little green

fragrant leaves

warm and clear your eyes your voice

as if all of you were here

memory savored but the cup is quickly empty

a few drops

still slightly warm

and then the leaves themselves

tangled wet mass good for only flower beds

Harbor at Keelung (Taiwan)

Spring night

and the harbor cool windy dark

freighters fishing boats
ride in cat's cradles of wobbly light
in mercury tatters
with smeared beads of blue deep orange
electric green

nodes of phosphorous ripple and leak
outward to black oil

other lights cables half ships
half wharfs half tires
fold down into the night

There are water sounds near the pilings
my skin tingles a little
hearing them

Where are they going these lights
or those other ones down there?
but with the sea breeze picking up cold
salt and diesel smelling

you know they're all going somewhere

Summer Rain (Taipei)

Misty after the rain late morning

leaves dripping full of light
summer and storms
are curtained in from the sea
are curtained in from the sea

sweetness like a potpourri
hangs in the park still

flower tea air

But more rain is coming
smoky folds of clouds around the hills

puddles splash passing cars
yellow cabs swish glistening
umbrellas crowd and peck umbrellas

at corners upside down buildings shine
wavy with watery bright signs
wedged through by blue vending carts

But green shade is under the heavy wicker tree
and quiet here and now
soft rhythmic dripping
red brick colored mud with small green vines
and a still white mist lingers
off near the temple

Small Park (Taipei)

Trees overshadow the tiny park
 a circular courtyard
paved with field stone broken in pieces
 and cemented into a jagged mosaic

two stone benches
 are set at right angles to a third
 like a horse shoe

everything roughly hewn here
 makeshift but beautiful anyway
 rough thoughtful beauty
 dusty old

Afternoon light is stark against the concrete wall across the
 street
 a new apartment house

but here under the trees it is gold and soft

 bright clover shapes slide across the stones
leaf shadows are like tiny masks laughing and shaking
 the tree branch above
 is a water serpent asleep in a green pool

Autumn winds are beginning to come
 a typhoon two weeks ago

usually there are old men here
 reading newspapers talking
 but not today

strange since it's beautiful today
yet old men are unpredictable

When the breeze picks up
the light shapes dance and toss
veins dilate brighten
scales flex
black claws of twigs flailing

a breathing bellows of sun-gold
roars as the wind gusts stiffening through
light-wings flashing for a second

then everything is quiet

On the floor the spots of light reveal a leopard or a fawn
asleep
although it is invisible

The stones are like chunks of rubble
dusty with the city's grime
crude hacked pieces of a jig saw
that will not fit the trees' diagrams
veined with granuled rivers of cement
they are like a map of some unknown region
ancient forbidding

Is there a great wall here as well?
is it this thin lip of cement
along one uneven line of stones
here where a red ant hurries
its shadow thrown against some pale sand grains?

Parked motorcycles crowd the sidewalk opposite
leaning the same way like toppled dominoes
the afternoon traffic is getting heavier

soon everyone will be getting out of work

Beautiful city where times intersect
 where the powers are seen
 and yet not seen
 where at moments a god will touch down
 here or there

what will become of you?

Under the *Rong* Trees (Taipei)

A banyan tree of autumn rain
has grown down over the city

I stand here under one umbrella
and several dark green *rong* trees

they crowd each other
and each is itself a crowd

a bundle of trunks not one and all contending

huge root systems range out

smooth brutal looking

like ropey striations of cooled lead
dense beards of aerial roots hang downward

twining in mid air
dry twig-like strands twisted in a loose weave

the ends hanging all undone

I am hiding under a huge unfinished basket
held upside down
meanwhile outside
the city has grown enormous
and somehow hollow

Misty nickel gray
with faintly luminous white outlines
grained somewhat fizzy

it has receded as though beneath an emulsion
and yet it seems so much louder
a waterfall clamor above and all around
a kind of frying sound
a pounding effervescence
something is being broken down
something else is burgeoning
you can smell it in the air

near the trees' edge
splinters of silver seven feet high
bore down into the paving stones

up in the tree an invisible bucket pours steadily
another one here another there

further in
near the trunks
plumb lines of rain come down
as though a roof were leaking

but yet there is no roof
the tree is not a dwelling but a sort of craft
wind gusts blow through

I breathe a cold spray from the sea of everywhere

water droplets in a stuttering stream
bat down heavily on my umbrella
it becomes a rudder the wind wrestles me for

even though it's dry around me
I feel somehow damp all over
suddenly I realize
several people are here with me

it's as if we were a kind of fruit growing here
first me and then a few others
and sure enough as soon as I turn around
there are already several more

we are multiplying rapidly

each with a ribbed and dome-like stem
then layers of damp cloth
and inside of this the pulp

A strange elated feeling seems to be with us
for a moment
as though some knot had suddenly come undone

how wet everything is

and looking out into the rain no one says anything

Palms (Taipei)

Palm trees sift and sieve the light
 huge blinds
 that yet block no one's view
they're made
 of light and water earth and air
and something else mysterious

 graceful in any weather
and especially at evening
 when the gold
slips through their ribbony fingers

 just as it does
 for poor street vendors
 here beneath them
though their fingers are more tight
 if not more strong

For palm trees are the profligates of light
 yet charmed and reigning ones
 somehow
they wear a crown of light although askew

However much they lose at dusk
 at dawn there's always more
 and then still more

Giving is not better it is all
 they seem to say
we are just gateways to the greater view

the whole sky

full of floating blue sand bays

and infinite magenta depths

or else the huge subtropical night

filled with heat lightning thunderheads

and opal moons

In the Trees (Hsinchu)

Under the wicker basket trees
 we walk among birth marks of shade
tiger stripes of light and dark
 and I bite your throat for a second
 it's a joke of course

Sun motes thicken here
 sit down wait
outside the dense loud traffic noise

Arms and legs reach up reach out
 a girl's crotch is spread wide open
 but leafy branches cover it

another couple over there
 tangled with shadows
set upside down in a green light
 see what she's doing

then a few walkers on the path
 talking distracted gone
 seeing nothing

Light fills the tree like water an aquarium
 green water
or like a thought the mind
 or is it dreams that fill the mind
 green and sun synapses
arterial boughs a bird's nest there
 it's like a clot

two birds alight the whole tree

like a deep pool ripples
they swim across its outer surface
what is it that they're looking for
but what is everything looking for

You have an appointment soon
(someone else?)
no I don't want to know
don't tell me
you kiss me again again and again
and then it's time and we have to go

Children's Games (Taipei)

Under the trees in the park
the rain is sifting tapping through

cool shivers first breezes of autumn
flowing in from the sea
premonitions
or as though someone had left a back door open
in a hot house

There are tatters of white mist
along the mountain's face
the crown not visible
Grey cloud cover over all and moving cloud
the light is flatter hard

Cool rain and sudden gusts of wind
the droplets strike here there
sift through the nervous leaves of the bamboo

children shouting running in the park
heavier rain begins falling
a summer feeling still
sudden swath of light through the foliage
which burns green a moment
as though re-awakened

Mothers older sisters
come to herd the children in
like herding cats but then
in ragged amoebas they get them all knead them a bit
amoebas become plankton
wheels spikes and stars

A push here push there gesture shout
familiar yet strange forces
pulse through the group unknown forces

what childhood memories are made right now?
indelible

Eventually they get straight lines
rows hand-linked chains of contagion

Light sieves are combed up the side of the
mountain's head
white cloud rifts widen

After a bit I notice suddenly the children are gone

the park has a strange emptiness
like an unused chess board
or a drained swimming pool

Mysterious shapes of rain
wet the stones here and there

no pattern
but soon it will be really coming down
we know this
but we don't know everything

--which season are we in? it's hard to tell

Windy Night (Taipei)

August night so windy fresh and mild
the air no longer stagnant
and just slightly cool
blowing
but not yet too strong
active searching steady and unsteady
a stirring somewhere in the night
a wakening in the air

hectic hypnotic breeze
wind agitating
trees that toss constantly
something unpredictable
you feel it building toward toward what?

every pinpoint of the dark is tense
the promise of the lightning strike
the energy of separation

A sound like pouring sand is in the trees
atoms funneling through night's hour glass
leaves like little tickets
are flashing pale gray

A typhoon coming toward the south
it will be there tonight they say
but here we'll only get a summer storm
the trees will get their leaves all dusted off
the night is opening – a threshold but to what?

here in Taipei

Winter Day (Taipei)

Misty envelopes from the sea
holding a small dime of sun

fog covers houses
with a thin whitewash
dark green of the metal railing looks pewter

silver yellow sun
pokes knitting needles through

the sky becomes slowly
then quickly blue

buildings streets rice fields
are complete again

the whole white chemical tank stands clear
a porcelain knob in its razor wire frame

even the wire is visible and shines

the gray macadam flood embankments
along the river sparkle

their stones are bright points

jackets are not needed by midday

blinds of the palm trees
tobacco brown gold green

hard to look at in the light
of the white blue January sky

Shuanglien Station (Taipei)

Awakened at five in the morning

by air raid siren fire the police
no a car horn stuck
no someone's dog is no

the Taoist temple down the street

a loud ram's horn trumpet sort of thing
pointless to name or to describe

and we are summoned by it but to what?

Penetrating drill of sound
pushed out into the morning
a purple sky
dust feathery clouds
the pink and orange winter dawn

in the courtyard –
a black-green egg of leaves
from which a street light is cracking

buildings are cubes of ash
lemon gray of security lights still on
sickly vigilance

A girl in a black skirt
hurries across the street
from the pink cellar entrance of the karaoke bar
gets into a parked Mercedes
Traffic is quickening already

and the earliest Tai Chi players
are moving in the Shuanglien park

All these unchanged yet changed

mere sound mere noise no
utterance music
neither of these

stern imploring disruptive
ungainly sound

not dignified no trace of beauty in it

not human and not animal not mechanical

frightening startling

sound of existence
of mere being itself

blowing into the world from the world beyond being

Winter Day (Taipei)

Mist air with rain points

very thin rain but heavy thick white mist
 gray air

off a little way a group of pines
tin colored scratchings in a milky solution

the world is a pearl now luminous opaque

I could walk to the end
come back around to this spot
but never see more than a little way ahead
a little way to right or left
a little way behind

The Exile (Taipei)

Embark one morning dark still

arrive in boat one evening sand bar leaves in water

freezing cold pulling the bow up

sunset in the river cannot talk to anyone
 cannot speak this language

stars are low over the trees

Return

Autumn fields at evening full of fire

others come toward me from the house

across ropes of smoke as though out of memory

asking who I am

Tryst in a Foreign City (Taipei)

In brandy colored light

in your room a screen of silver

and then darkness and you near me

hair of incense smoke I seem to breathe in all of it

so dizzy

Keelung

Here in the unknown city
and today the harbor is so bright
gold crosshatching of sunlight across waves
jade green water near a fishing boat's water line painted
black
in need of a paint job
nets the color of lead hang from a small boom of some
kind
think of the depths they go to
think of what happens there
terrible struggles concealed in all things

Out a ways the light is small sparks from a flint
the water flat bright gray
far out
a fishing boat hangs in a net of sun glitter
like a mosquito that can't get through

it is only after a while that you realize it is moving
stuck zipper of the water's dress
the city skyline far off not really beautiful

Far beyond that
high structures of thunderheads
in the remote blue blue distance

very vague like half erased outlines on a chalkboard
unreal looking
there will be a storm coming up
maybe a typhoon but not for a while

After a Typhoon

The typhoon now over
the sky is clear again and the moon
is beautiful when we look up just by chance

flashing through the bridge's cables as we drive along

tattered yet whole on the small ripples of the lake

stark over the dipping roofs of the memorial
even though it's so brightly lit

the breeze is gentle again
and we decide to get a beer at some outdoor café
in Tien Mu

Sitting there at wooden tables
beneath apricot colored lanterns
(they got them back out so fast)
a green lime wedge in the neck of a pale gold Mexican beer
(in the light it looks like brass)

I play with a small Buddha a Mila Buddha as it's called

the jovial round belied bare bellied Buddha of mercy

patron of earthly as well as of heavenly joy
or so it seems
carved in an inexpensive small piece of jade

The Mountain

Heavy rain clouds flow through the mountain
it has become porous
like a sponge soaked in milk

what makes it so big is what passes in and out

patches of green bloom from it
shapes of stone unfold here there

we see the landscape as it emerges into being

Sometimes the clouds get heavier
full of a dense white mist

and the mountain becomes more vague

is it not almost weightless then

a frayed fabric its print very indistinct

in another moment it is entirely invisible

and yet we still are seeing it

Rainy Mountain

Layers of heavy clouds pass over
the mountain's face

gray rain is behind them
and a thin transparent steam

like someone pulling a shower curtain back
to find a shower and someone taking it
in this case it's the mountain

Patches of it come out of the white
and then slide back

Is it moving there behind the curtain
or maybe it's striding along
after the rain clouds themselves
and these flow so fast escaping

yet they can barely keep ahead of it
as it grabs handfuls of them
that come away in tatters

these it flings off to this side or to that

When will the final confrontation take place
the immovable thing in pursuit

the elusive and shapeless forced somehow
to stand and fight

It's true the mist and rain hang on for days sometimes
but then quite suddenly they disappear

light opens its jade jewel box in the mountain's face
dazzles it with mirror shine

things become clear and definite again

brighter quicker

and the idea of what is good returns

A Step Toward Them

Lunch time and walking down the Dun Hua South Road
through the overpass with the metal sculpture of
Don Quixote on his horse I think it is

They are tearing up the street again
dark brown workmen with no shirts
a bare pipe gleams silvery metallic blue
like a horsefly's wings
--do they have horse flies in Taiwan?
two guys sit on the truck gate eating lunch from small
white boxes

Near the Da Long court apartments
a woman in an orchid pink skirt slit up the side
hair half way down her back
silver stiletto heels
high sharp cheekbones and dark glasses --
and then gone behind the wrought iron electronic gate

Four yellow cabs in a knot on a small side street --
one blocking the way of the other three
who are blocking each other
a vendor with a blue cart making *neiyo bing* --
I would think it was too hot
for cream-filled cakes
to each his own

Down that street or lane as they're all called
night club signs in the midday
are like snuffed out candles

The sun will kill you here
I stop in at a Seven Eleven for a bottle of water

the bell rings loud as I cross the threshold
the clerk is just as quick with his *mei guon ling*
which means welcome
and a beautiful smile too
straight white teeth broad face a flat nose
copper skin very Taiwanese
polite and shy young guy maybe twenty

On the Ba De Road near Taiwan TV
the stars of local television sit-coms and soap operas
loom above the sidewalk
smiling deities at the temple gate

The blue hot sky burns
the sun presses down
a parking meter
curves into the vaguely blue fishbowl
of the taxi cab windshield
as I am opening the back seat door

Another smile and an amused nod
 at my foreigner's Mandarin
 finally out of the sun
 and I've got -- in an English translation --
 the poems of Jiao Tung to look at as we drive

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

(AND ATTEMPTS AT EXPERIENCE)

First things first...

The Moth

I'll tell you a story now
And you have to think about it
You might not understand it yet
But I know someday you will.

There was once
A little girl,
And she ran around her yard,
Yes, she played so very hard,
So very hard and *very* hard.

The sun shined down,
It told her "Stop!
You've got to rest a little while.
You whirl around just like a top."
(She could see the sun's big smile.)

She said "No no, Mr. Sun, thank you,
But I don't need to rest at all.
I want to grow up big and tall
Just like my Mom and just like Dad.
Running all the time's not bad.
That's what makes me grow and grow."

The sun said "No no, no no, No!

That's not the thing that makes you grow.

The thing that makes you grow is – rain.

Rain makes little children grow.
Everybody knows that.
Don't you know?"

"I don't think so, Mr. Sun.
And I still like to run and run
All day."

"Yes, it's true," said Mr. Sun.
Rain makes the children grow.
"Really, go ask anyone."

And so she said "OK."

She ran to ask her puppy first.
"Pup, what's the thing that makes me grow?"
Pup said he didn't really know.

"Maybe lying in the shade.
You know that's what I like to do.
Also, I like chewing bones.
Did you ever try that too?"

"Puppy, you are really dumb.
I don't like to chew bones.
I chew gum.

Bubble gum is what I chew.
If you weren't so dumb,
You'd chew it too."

"Well maybe that's what makes you grow,"

Her puppy told her, “I don’t know.”

So then she ran to ask the fish.
The fish was down inside the pond,
Under the water.

Looking down,
She saw her own head (with leaves for a crown!)

“Dear miss fish, do you know
How I can grow
So big and tall?
Since just last month, I’ve grown a whole inch up the wall.
That’s how my mother measures me.”

“Hmmm, let me see,
And let me say,”
Said dear miss fish,

“Maybe it’s when you make a wish.
The more you wish, the more you grow.
The more you wish, the more you know.

That’s what makes you get so tall,
Growing higher up the wall,
Just like a vine.
I think it must be very fine,
Getting bigger by making wishes.
I’m going to tell all the other fishes.”

And so she swam away.

So anyway and anyway,
This little girl was really stuck.
Who could she ask?
She went to ask the duck.

“Mrs. Duck, just let me say,
I see you running here every day.
And you have little ducklings with you.

They are very interesting
But there is just one little thing
I need to know.

“What’s that, my dear?”

“Well, every month and every year,
I get a little or a lot more big.
Isn’t that what your ducklings did?
And if it was, how did they do it?”

“I fed them lots of worms, you know.
Eating worms is what made them grow.

Maybe you should eat some worms.
Ask your mother if she has any.”

“Oh Mrs. Duck, I don’t *want* any!
Worms are not the thing for me.”

“How do you know?” said Mrs. Duck,
“You have to try and see.”

She didn’t like the sound of that.
So then she ran back to her yard.
It all seemed very, very hard
To understand.

She looked at one, and then her other, hand.
Left and right,
They both were longer,
Wider, bigger, and a little stronger.

Remember when the peanut butter jar
Was just so, so, so, so, so – Oh!

But now it wasn't hard at all.
Well maybe just a little bit.

But if she put it in between her knees
And squeezed it tight,
Then she could get the lid off all right.

Her mother sometimes let her do it.

So then she went to ask a frog.
He was sitting on a log.

When she bent down to him
Her shadow fell across his chin.
And then his strange big eyes
Were like a round green watery surprise.

And he looked at her,
Sizing her up.

No, he wasn't like her friendly pup.
He was strange and small
And kind of mean.

He was the strangest thing she'd ever seen,
Sitting on a log almost all the day.

She almost forgot what she had come to say.

“Mr. Frog,
I see you're sitting on your log.
I don't want to bother you,
But I hope that you can tell me true.

Do you know how children grow?
How can it be that day by day
And month by month and year by year
We get a little or maybe a lot bigger?
Nobody seems to know about this here.”

Then Mr. Frog,
Sitting right there on his log
Said “Flies.”

“Flies?” she asked him.

“Yes,” he told her, “flies.”
“Flies. I eat them every day.

Flies for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
Eat your flies. It’s the only way.
Eat lots of flies, you’re sure to grow up tall and strong.
Eat lots of flies, and it won’t be long.”

Well this was just ridiculous.
Who would ever think of this?
She knew that eating flies
Or worms was not the way
Or lying in the shade.
That isn’t how a big tall girl is made.

So then she went to ask the cow.
The cow would tell her anyhow.
But all the cow would say was “hay.”
“Hay and grass and grass and hay.
I eat them happily every day.”

So then she ran back to her yard.
It all seemed very, very hard
To understand.

And then
The sun was smiling down on her again,
And he was saying,
“What are you doing? Are you playing?”

“No, Mr. Sun,” she had to say,
“Today I just don’t want to play.”

“Why not? is something wrong?
Why don’t you skip and sing a song?

You always run and play so much.
You’re always such
A spinning little top,
And you never seem to stop,
Always zooming here and there
Like a bumblebee in the bright day’s air.

“That may be how I was before,
But now today,
And more and more,
I want to know
How it is I grow,
And no one tells me anything that’s right.
I asked the duck, I asked the fish,
I asked the frog
As he was sitting on his log,
I even asked you,
But though you’re high and strong and bright,
I don’t think what you said was right.
I can’t grow up from eating flies or worms,
Or lying in the shade
Or from the rain.”

“How do you know?
We have to wait till it rains again,

And then we'll see."

"No, Mr. sun, that's really not the way for me."

"All right," said Mr. Sun,
"Maybe what you say is true.
That's really not the way for you.
But if that's so,
Then how can we know
How you can get bigger and taller,
If it's true
That's really not the way for you?"

But what's wrong with eating flies
And worms, and, say,
What's wrong with hay?"

"Those things
Are not the way for me.
Don't you know
And can't you see.
With your bright and burning light
Don't you see these things aren't right?
At least not for a girl.

I think that's what I am."

And now her head was in a whirl.

"I'm not a frog,
Sitting in the water
Or sitting on a log,
I'm not a cow that's eats up grass and hay
All day long and every day,
I'm not a fish that swims away,
I'm not a duck eating her worms up,

And I know I'm not a dog,
Even though I love my pup.

"I think you've said the magic word,"
The sun said smiling in the sky.

"Dog?" she asked him, "is that it? Or pup?"

"No," he told her, "something else.
You have to go and find out what it is."

"But what?" she said.
"You have to go
And find it out," the sun told her.
"It really isn't something that I know about."

And then she heard a voice.
It called her by her name.

The sun had never said her name
And neither did the frog
And neither did the cow or the fish or the duck
And neither did the dog,
Even though he loved her
Just like she loved him.

But it was special to be called by name.
It was like a special piece of luck,
And when she heard it
Nothing was the same.

But still she didn't know
What she was or how she could ever grow.

And so it was her mother
Calling her back home,

Telling her it was time for dinner
And now she had to come.

And so she ran back. There was lots to eat.
She ate and ate,
She almost ate the plate.

But no matter how much it was,
Her mother still kept smiling at her.
The sun was sinking past the window.
A golden light filled the dinner table.
Then her father came in late,
Since he'd been working all day.
Her mother went to kiss him hi,
And the little girl raised her arms up to him
And felt the bristles of his bristly chin.

Afterward she helped her mother
Wash the dishes,
And her father helped her too.
The three of them were quite a crew.
And not a single dish was broken
And only kind and helpful words were spoken.

Puppy came and sat on a rug
By the kitchen door.
He looked very snug,
And after a while he began to snore.

And then her mother told her
That it was time for bed.
The little girl was sleepy,
She was a real sleepyhead.
As her mother was washing her
Then getting her into bed
Her father came and put three kisses

Right on her forehead,

Then he smiled his big tall smile
Kind of like the sun's big smile
But so much nicer by a mile
And then he went away,
But she knew he'd never go away to stay.

He'd never go away for good,
He'd always come back,
Yes, she knew he would.
Her mother tucked her into bed.

And now the moon was bright.
It shined in through her bedroom curtains,
So that they looked like white moth wings.
She'd never seen such magic things.

Her mother kissed her on her cheek
And whispered in her ear
For her to have sweet dreams
(Her soft voice sounded far and near
And near and far and far and near).

And now the little girl
Was way, so far away,
Although she knew she wouldn't stay,
But she was flying so far off
On the soft warm back of a bright-winged moth,
(But she was really in her bed.)
And in her dream she finally knew
The reason why she grew and grew.

Now, can you tell me, do you know it too?

And then...

Spring

Spring is the thing
That everybody talks about
But nobody can hold it,
Grab onto it –
Hey little girl, my little girly girl,
Do you want to play?
The sun shines bright
And stronger every day.
My guy, my guy,
Sharpen up your arm and eye
For baseball, football, soccer,
Swimming – finally! – best of all,
And oh I almost forgot:
Since girls get to do
All those things too,
You're not just my girl or girly.
Just like your boyfriend,
You can be big and strong too.

Camping Out

Camping camping
Camping in the open air
Camping so we do not care
Who does what to whom
In politics --
They're just a bunch of money-ticks.

Fishing fishing
Fishing in the clear clear
Water – O my son and
O my lovely daughter,
Let's get out our stuff
And go.

School's Out

Well it's report card time.
Oh well. Why don't
You do well? What an interesting
Thing it is – to learn something.
Strange and special.

Our insides change a little
And we change the rest to fit;
What I didn't know before
I take in like a break,
And, like a bone, it will set.

But if you don't learn right
Then everything is wrong;
Inside I'm like a puzzle undone,
Or I creak like an out-of-tune song.

Butterfly Attack

Even in the city
There are butterflies,
White ones usually,
Tumbling from house to house.

It's a good thing
They're as small as they are,
Otherwise, if we
Opened up the door
They'd butterfly us to the wall
Or flit us to the floor.

Fruit in Season

Apples and oranges,
Summer and winter fruit
But which is which
Depends on where and when.

If we're north, apples –
Summer cherries through and through,
With oranges like winter puzzles we
Open up and hold inside our hand.
Maps of veins, dome-like water bubbles.
The peace of the world is the world itself.
But what if the times and places
Are switched around?
Then everything is changed.
Apples are bright things from way far off
And oranges run with juice.

Sun and Moon

Sun coming up through cloud crown,
The king is here, therefore;
His sweeping fire sets windows
Shining with his love of just himself.

The moon queen rides the night
Through the brambles of the trees.
Spider shadows on the sidewalk,
The spiders are her slaves.

Some are like the sun king,
Full of self and full of fire,
Some are like the moon queen's court,
Spider in spider interlocked.

My Hair, Your Hair

What kind of summer hair do you have?
And what kind of winter hair?
Whatever it is, I'll bet it's different,
Just like we change our clothes.

But when I change outside, I change
Inside as well. Birds and flowers
In my mind -- and in the winter
Tinging icicles hanging from my brow.

Don't let that scare you off though,
Icicles are important too –
I think of them the same as
Flower petals and the sky's bright blue.

Reading

Reading is a funny thing, even though
You're doing it right now.
We stay who we are
But become someone else,
Stay where we are but travel so far.

Do you like to read? I do.
I just read my lines to you,
Over and over. They're not bad,
For such a dope like me.
But in the library
You'll find whole kingdoms.

Love Song

Love, I love you and love to give
You all my love, my love, for free.
But every love that's given out
Asks something back. I ask of you
To love me just as I love you.
I ask of you to love me back.
I hope you do, I hope you do.

You

So
Many ways
I love you,
Let me count them all.
No,
It can't be done
It's impossible.

Sun

I'm the sun, the early rising seer
With my one eye open already
Across the roofs; and this down here
Is the garden, and a gardener
Is doing his work in the waking up air.
You hear people talk about this or that,
But the garden isn't talking.
We put it together stitch by stitch,
One after another. And so that's it.
Nothing good gets done
Without a ready working hand
And the always there sun.

Cooking the Moon

The only way to cook the moon
Is this: first get the right size pan –
Too small and the moon spills over,
Too big and it slips away inside.

Add enough oil to get a shine,
A nice moon like reflection.
No too much or the moon will drown,
Too little and it won't shine bright

Then take the pan and hold it near
The window when the moon is full.
You have to angle it just right,
And when the moon shines in the pan

And fills the bottom of it up --
Not too small and not too big --
But fills the pan with its shiny face,
Then close the lid down quickly

And take it to the stove (don't peak).
That's the way to cook the moon.
(Who knows what we're going to make --
A moon pie, or a moon cake!)

Oh let's try it pretty soon!

The Goldfish

Under the piano is a goldfish,
And under the goldfish is a moon.
The movements of the fish are like a fish,
But of the water they're an elegant monsoon.

Fish tail and moonlight, deepest shimmer note.
Everything's confused in the small bowl.
Yet the bowl's a room in an apartment.
Living in a place like that -- the ultimate cool!

The Harvest Moon

When the moon comes rolling, the great harvest moon,
It comes over the house tops, it's the color of copper,
It's the size of a quarter, now it's a dime,
It sometimes comes late and sometimes comes soon.

Scratchy copper dipped in jade, that's what it reminds me
of.
I never saw that until now, but somehow knew it would be
like that.
But why do they call it the harvest moon is what I want to
know.
Do you harvest it with a pitchfork if it dips too low?

Couldn't eat it. We know it's not green cheese and way too
bright
To have around all the time. Hope it wouldn't be too hot,
just clear and bright.
Keep them in bushel baskets in the garage, maybe
underneath a tarp.
(My guess is that they give off music like a faint faint
harp.)

And Again

Hey the harvest moon has come.
Look at it up there, dum-de-dum.
The harvest moon's for looking at,
But harvest vegetables are for eating.

Acorn squash and butternut,
Spaghetti squash. There's no
Such thing. There is, no lie.
Pumpkin is a good one too.

But whatever kind it is,
When your mother makes it for you
Don't give her a hard time.
Eat them all, they all taste good.

The Builder

Power of the summer sun,
Who can withstand it, who
Can make it something helpful,
Who can make it part of them?
Only the gardener rising early in the morning,
Only the workman hammering all day.
They have the energy, the strength – another body
And another mind is in them.
The sun is like a part of them,
In them it lives, it grows and builds.

Fishing

Fishing is a mirror where the man looks in
But can't see anything except himself and his pole –
Sticking up or out like an antenna.
The fish has a picture of the man, nice and clear, though.

Like a tv set or dvd the man is nice and clear,
But his mind is not (to the fish), no, it's a blank,
Or like an old fashioned tv set on the blink.
It isn't clear what the man thinks he's doing –

He could be just daydreaming but seems to concentrate.
He could be concentrating but sometimes seems to dream.
In any case it's a strange thing to do.

Only the man's hand and wrist remain steadily awake
As they try to feel what the fish on the other end might do.
So that's it – hand and wrist awake, mind and head
just half.

Thinking

Do you like to fish?
I sometimes do.
Though what you catch
Is up to you.

It might be a real fish
Or a daydream fish.
A thought's dream too
Or a daydream's thought.

Fishing

O I don't like to touch the worm!
And so I have Dad do it for me.
Another thing I don't understand
Is why they like worms to begin with.

Fish in the water, worm on land –
Normally fish eat fish's food.
I guess it must be like a treat
The fish gets sometimes to eat.

Fall

The sun comes through the leaves this morning
Walking beside me as I go, and as I go
The leaves drop down around me tip-tapping
My eyes and wrist and the patch at my elbow.

Autumn is my favorite time of year
Because the colors are so beautiful,
But also since they don't stay in one place
But fall and float and flutter down.

My mind floats with them as they go,
Caught by the wind and flurried around.
Going so many places in so many colors,
Am I one thing or many, somehow brought together?

Leaves

The leaves fall down the leaves fall down
Around and around they go,
The leaves are flurried, and you want to say
To them, what's the rush?

But the wind is always in a rush,
Especially in the autumn time.
It must be because it has the winter
Following so close behind.

Autumn Song

I am a leaf
Too pretty to fall,
But I know
That as leaves go
They all all go, or almost all.

This time though
I think we'll all go –
No, I don't think any will be left.

It's something
In the wind this time,
Strange strange wind so strong –
We'll just have to flutter
And go along.

Crystal

Butterflies' wings in the frozen glass
Soon there'll be a thaw.
Katydid's wings in the frozen glass,
Mantis wings, beetle wings.
But soon there'll be a thaw,
They'll uncrack, disappear and flow,
And live again

Wings and Magic Eyes

Hummingbird's wings
Frozen in the window's glass,
Yet moving so fast still --
Bumblebee katydid and wasp
Frozen to ice figures in the corners.
Eyes of all creatures' iris rays
Split the frozen pane
As they look in anyway.

Ring Around

Ring around the maple tree, maple tree
Ring around the maple tree,
Soon we'll have our buckets out.

Ring around the frozen ground, frozen ground
Ring around the frozen ground,
Soon we'll all unfreeze it.

Ring around the sky above, sky above
Ring around the sky above,
Someone will catch it in their bucket

Girls

I like to watch girls dance
And swing their hair,
I like to watch them laugh
And hold their mouth
And hug themselves
With their arms crossed tight.

Why do they act the way
They do? Why do they laugh
And skip like that?
It isn't like us boys at all.
I like the special games they play
In the summer sun, or in the leaves in the fall.

Lights and Shadows

I sit in the tree's shadow.
Lines and patterns thrown down
Thrown over me,
I'm like a cat with a cat's mind,
A cat with a cat's mind.

I sit by the fish tank looking in.
Light and shadows cross each other.
They fill me up and then
I'm like a fish with a fish's mind,
A fish with a fish's mind.

Sun and Tree

Hey way up
In the trees there there's
A funny sound.
It must be the sun.

Sun why how
Do you come now,
Raying in so late?

Chisel rays of light
Threaten to entice my vision
Further into one thing,
Which can only be
The whole whole tree.

Tree Shadow and Snow

The maple tree's shadows are tangled in the snow.
I know about shadows and their branches,
I know about the snow.
But what about the maple tree,
Where does it want to go?

White Butterflies

Shining white butterflies
Climb without touching
The garden's vines,
Climb without touching each other.

White butterflies like bright
Pieces of the sun
Twine without touching
Even though they are one.

Shining white butterflies,
Pieces of the sun,
Whisper in my ear
Where have you been?
How far? Did you have fun?

My Grandfather

Me and my grandpa
Dug the garden, made it grow.
Now he's up in heaven
Somewhere, but I
Have no way to know.

We worked so long and hard
To make the garden
Grow green and tall.
Where he is now
I have no way to know at all.

The Sun and then the Night

Bright lemon sun
Of early afternoon,
Blue sky far around.

Pink of earliest evening,
Copper clouds pencil shadow
Everything.

Night is spilled ink
Covering the table of the sky,
Covering everything.

The Moon Above the House

The moon above the house
Is glittery and gold – the moon's usually silver,
But this one's so cold
That it's gone from silver
All the way to gold.

The snow around the house
Is green -- no, not green;
(You've never seen snow that was green
And neither have I),
But looking way up far into the sky
Then back down to earth
The snow looks first white,
Then almost light blue, then the night
Spins us black all around
Till it comes out like green –
(Sort of) – white, blue, black, green –
The strangest of colors that I've ever seen.
And I bet that's the same for you.

Steps on the snow – do you want
To hear this story? – then pay
Attention better; I keep having to pause
To see if you're sleeping.
(You can sleep later: listen – here, now –)
The steps on the snow – they aren't Santa Claus,
You know and I know
There's never been any such thing.
But it's an old man bent double
From all that he's carrying:

A can with a brush that he uses for shaving,
An old dirty toothbrush with the bristles all curling,
Some old string
He uses to tie things,
Some pieces of wood,
Matches, wet,
A single cigarette
(How to get more he sometimes thinks,
Or even, for that matter, food).

What can we do about all the old men, and old women too,
And even the kids who are like that?
What can all of us do?
What can we do, or I do?
I do and you?

Evil Friends

Did you ever have a friend
Who wasn't really a friend,
So in the end
She seemed the worst
possible boy or girl?
There's a whole bunch like that, so friendly at first
Then they seem to have a []sack
Full of half-truths and lies
That they carry on their back,
And whenever you do something silly or dumb
They take one out and say
"See what he or she does!"

And the expressions they have sometimes,
Neither smiling nor mean,
But like they were some kind of joking machine,
And they just want to make you into a joke.
Or they really do care what happens to you
But [though] they always always pretend that they do.

Did you ever have a friend
Who was really an enemy?
But every so often
They will do something nice
And their laughter sounds like an empty tall glass
When you throw in some ice –
And that's something, by the way, that you always
Got to watch out for:
They've always got marijuana, cigarettes or beer
They slide them to you across the table.
Will you take them? Are you able
To say no, no thanks. Or do you go down

In their biggest joke of all
All over the town –
Smoking and drinking
And worst of all drugs?

The Drinker and the Smoker

Who are you? I'm the drinker,
I get out of my head every day.
And you? I'm the smoker,
I cough up my lungs for all to see.
The drinker is living under water,
Some compare him to a fish.
The smoker is living in the air,
As though burnt up from a chimney stack.

You don't want to swallow the world,
So then don't drink, you want to *see* it.
You don't want ashes in yourself, yourself
In yourself is what you want.

The Fall

The fall burns with fires in the trees, of no heat
Blazes in the sky, of no fire
A second tree reflected in a pool, of no sky
Leaves and their reflected leaves that fall and meet

The fall creates a double world, but I don't mind
Perhaps my mind grows double too
Or else I have two faces, but I always do
Perhaps two names as well, but no one's told me

A double forest grows in winter, double trees
Made of black shadows grow from the first –
Blue, silver, green, made of shadow
Both true and false trees grow

True and false forests grow in my eye
But both the true and false are true

Sunflower Dream

Help!

The sunflower was chasing me.
But in my dream
It didn't feel like a dream.
It was more
Like when you're falling
And can't hold on to anything –
Huge sunflowers
Towering up to the sky,
So tall,
And it seemed that each one had an eye
In the center and a nose –
And somewhere a mouth
Hidden in the roots of each dream flower,
All running after me
Waving their long arm-leaves:
'Squeak squeak squeak,' they said,
'You're going to fall into our arms.'
'No I'm not!' You're going to be
Tangled in our roots.' 'No I'm not,' I said.
'We're going to eat you eat you eat you.'
'No you're not,' I said, and they went away.
And then looking around it was day.

Water Lights

Black water alive with houses made of light,
Luminous doors and windows
Opening into depths. It is so far
From one room to another, the lake
Itself would have to be stepped across.
I can't swim that well, especially
Under water, and especially in the dark.

We're cut off from the sunken rooms forever,
That much seems clear, since there's no road.
You have to get there by more subtle elements.
Water and light are both ways that appear
Yet only by night, and only on clear nights,
In oils beyond the masters, that beckon and forbid.

Ghost Lights

Ghost lights in the night
That shimmer
In the water

Slashed lights in the woods
That chase you
Beneath the moon

Stars scattered breathless
You've never seen
So many

The round thing in the cornfield
That lights up
Then is gone

One Day

You'd jump at the chance – to die!
Suppose I were dead,
What would it feel like,
What would it be?
I hope to get to die one day.

I don't know anyone who has,
Except for uncle Jack,
But I didn't really know him.
He drank too much, that's what they say.
But everyone will die one day.

The Sunset Tree

Then the tree
Is all orange
Suffused with copper
And then darker –

And then not –
A kaleidoscope
But a network
Of things.

Glowing slightly
There are oranges
Apples in a vase
And wedges of more light,

Little fish in water –
Let me see,
Now they're bubbles
And the tree is a deep pond –

Disclosing light
And depth,
Rippling
Deep into the world.

Which way is up?
And which way down?
Which way's the world
And which way nothing at all?

Farewell

Master guitar beyond belief – beyond belief !
Master piano, bass, drums –
Remember –
Where there is one, there are two,
All the way down
All the way down to you.

Master guitar, or if not, master something!

INSCRIPTIONS, FORESHADOWINGS

I

Illuminator, I can never
Feel you
Near me, I search
For my renewal, yet in vain

Although I want to
Know you, perhaps I sense
That you are near me
Now and then

You circulate
And are a part
Of the city
Of men

Yet exist
Elsewhere,
Somewhere
Where?

Sun above buildings, the
Trees move
With the wind

What moves
Inside of men,
Inside of women,
In the time below?

I am an exile
Here in the city of men
What can I be
In the Heavenly
City above?

II

Illuminator, you
Who elude me,
Even best efforts
As though

Chasing a shadow
And yet you are,
So it is
Written, light

Come to me
Where I am
Here in the
Dark, myself

Or shall I
Not ask? instead
Merely stay
Here, silent, and thinking

III

Light through
The window
Haunted with
Shadow bars,

Illuminated
Cloth of drapes,
Palm fronds
Of blinds

I see these
Reminders,
Reminders,
Reminders

IV

Where there is light
There is fire, or
If there might not be,
Then how, where?

In the sun
There is fire,
There is
Infinite fire,

It burns for
The world,
Though the world
Stays as it is

V

In the end
There are
Gaps, and a life
Leaks away

In the end
There is this,
A ring
Is pulled from a hand

And yet it
Is written
There is something
And somewhere

VI

Illuminator, inhabitant
Of thought
Beyond thinking
Where thought cannot,

What cannot be
Seen, deep in
The eye itself,
Blind spot of light,

Illuminator, extending
Hands so purely
Empty, shadows
Of tree branches

Blown through
By the wind

VII

Spirit of holiness
Set down your light
Here to guide me,
Here all around me,

Smallest of places
Here, greatest
Of light, here
And now place and time

VIII

I seek to help
Those who
Can't be as they
Need to

Bringing them
Loaves and fishes
Not from myself
But you

IX

Steps in the darkness
Nonetheless somehow
Guided, not guided
But unthought, unwilled,

Almost, almost right

X

Light on snow
Faint blue with
Shadows of trees,
Dark leaves scattered

With branches
Quite bare,
Loud crows
Alighting

Something perceived
Not apparent
But here,
Growing silently

Through me
As I stand here,
Watching,
Listening

XI

Who has come
Down from
The light, scattering
Radiance unseen,

Invisible,
Insight unknowable,
Dream bread
Inedible?

Time reaches
Out in
A vortex
Down the street

XII

And so
When the angel
Announced
Impossibility –

Radiant, golden,
Eternal, unreal –
The Word moved
In dark strings,

Caught in them
Out of tune,
Silent, discordant,
Ringing in veins of light

XIII

Give to the poor
Their bread
That they need,
The doctors

Must come
To them,
How else to
Be human?

We,
The observers,
How else
To live?

XIV

You the
Observer,
What do you
See?

The man –
Yes he is
That –
Standing and lost?

XV

Writers
With fancy
Speech –
Confections,

Delusions

XVI

Sub-human scum,
Scum
And rabble –
These are so many

Money, it
Is money
That flurries
The mind's breath

As though
The leaves
Should blow
The wind

XVII

I am the
Lord of words
What is
Unspoken

Speaks now
Through me
What is unknowable,
This I yet know

What is
Unshowable,
Unacknowledged,
I show

XVIII

You have no coat,
No hat and no
Gloves, and
It's freezing

Snow and
Ice needles
Blow slanted
In sleet wind

Your eyebrows
White, your face
Red, your hands
Raw and stiffened

You call to me
From your place
Near the bank's
Overhang –

“Please sir,”
Coming forward –
“Please sir,
Some spare change”

XIX

In the
Psychiatric
Hospital
There are

Those who
Wait, fearing
Their own
Minds,

Their crumbling
And porous
Selves – others
Are moving

Through them,
Appearing,
Speaking,
Warning

XX

We rest in
The warm sun
Of the hospital
Compound

A plane
Appears
From the nowhere
Out of bright infinite blue

Low above
The buildings
The shadow
Of its wings

Across the
Grass and up
-- a cross
Of shadow,

Of a machine,
Flows, rippling,
Climbing
The sunlit wall

XXI

Illuminator, you work
Within me now
At every point
Of my being erased

My glass
Of slowing
Effervescence,
My evermore

Approximate
Outline, a fading
Silhouette
On your bright white ground

XXII

Earliest morning,
And I think
Of the day
Before it has come

Yet even
In the darkness
Well before sunrise,
From set stones

Of black marble –
Horizon clouds
Shot through with
Injections

Of cornflower light,
The day is already,
The time is slipping by,
Tasks mounting within

XXIII

Our tasks are so many –
The others who
Need what we have,
If we have it,

If we have it to give
This is our doubt,
The narrow ledge
That we walk

On one side
Is a wall of
Concrete and steel,
Of money and law,

On the other,
Catastrophe of
Historical failure, corruption –
Aborted, useless, and erased

XXIV

My existence
Unwritten by
The others
Who crowd me,

They who despise
The type of self
That I am,
Although they don't know it –

Yet changes
In motions, new cloud
Patterns forming
In the sky – look up!

Cautious, and wary,
I walk beneath
The radiant blue bowl –
Watching, guessing,

With new aspirations

XXV

Leaves littered
On the ground,
Wet and rain-limp
Yet still

With their veins,
Treacherous, slippery
At times, even
Dangerous –

So many there are
I think as I walk along,
So many fallen leaves
And the hazards they create

XXVI

A stone
Long
Ago was placed
In my hand

Who did it and when?
Impossible questions
A candle lit in my mind
And then

A fountain
Opened in my hand

XXVII

Lying down
To sleep
At midnight,
Sheave by sheave

Littered
Beside me
On the earth-
Field

Like leaves
Littered aside,
Yet still more than leaves,
Sheaves fallen

To enwrap me
In equivocal shelter,
An exhibited exposure
All corn husks

And bright hair

XXVIII

And a gaping
Nakedness
Exposed, this
Is my core –

Cells, elements,
Mosaics perhaps
Seeds of the future,
Remnants of past

Transience – was
It growing at all
Or withering? –
There is none who can say

Light of the
Bright moon, of autumn – full
And beacon-like –
Burning me with questions

XXIX

Unknown and
Dimly known,
The opening
Of Light

In the landscape
Of the mind,
The stealing
Of soft radiance

So slowly through
The self of
Memories – some
Faint and others

The occult and
Agonized and dark
Yet just as any field
Takes on opal frosts

At morning
Or sun sparkling dew
In the first
Burnt chill of the winter,

So then this other too

XXX

In the end of
Illusion there
Is calmness
And not peace

Calmness disturbed
By the agitations
Of the day,
The weather

Of circumstance,
The vileness
Of humans and
The darkness of their hearts

XXXI

Distorted teacher,
You who cast abroad
The bad seed of
Your illness,

It is not seeds
That you spread,
It is powers
And powers of powers,

Multiplied, multiplied,
Beyond any walls
Or curriculum, far
Beyond yourself –

An evil far beyond your mere self
And your mindless protocols

XXXII

Illuminator, I have
The flaw written
Down the length
Of my character

Like lightning
Splitting a tree
Down through – I
Am the focal point

Which everything
Must lean toward,
I am the only
Living creature on earth

XXXIII

I am not inclined
To kneel down and
Pray, I do not feel
Like going to confession

These things,
Although it might sound
Arrogant, strike me
As for fools,

Or otherwise
For children,
But I am neither
Deep in ancestral dreams,

Far in the pillaged heart,
Well into the vortex
That the urban street
Becomes, in the vivid

Trauma and terror
Of the mugging or the rape,
In the consultation with
The homeless, the addicted,

The dysfunctional, the
Insulted and the injured,
I, like some others –
This is where I'm found

XXXIV

Instructors, how many?
Can the earth
Know its own?
Can mystical

Viaticum be changed
To a word, a word
Of many words, and
Relationships come

Forward where miracle
Had been? Yet Christ
Did as much, his speech
Gathering thousands,

His poor robes
Promising little,
His two hands
Holding nothing

XXXV

Instructor, crucified,
Your arms are
Open wide, as though
To embrace the world

And yet
You cannot move,
The world
Is untouched

XXXVI

The teacher, scourged
At a whipping post,
Gouts of blood
And strips of flesh

Torn off, and we,
Below, bleed also,
Tear our own flesh,
Or have it torn by others

XXXVII

Radiant passion
To fill the whole void
Of earth, this is
The advent gift,

This is the holy trace,
This is the Lord
Who lies hidden within
The numinous gesture,

The eye quick with mercy
Or the eyes closed in thought

XXXVIII

The gift of existence
Overwhelms the existent,
Fills, and fills further,
Every point of its life,

Every organ of self
And soul a virtual
Sun, streaming outward
And outward, profusion,

No limit, endless
And infinite, beyond
Any calculus, even though mortal,
Yet still with no measure

And still with no end

XXXIX

Medicine for the mind,
Advice for the body too –
Power streams into
The soul by these and yet

Other routes, for these
Are the measured ways,
Gradient, weighted,
Yet our life has few markers,

And its substance is light

XL

You who are reading
Me now must do so
With forethought,
With afterthought,

With meditative care
You do not know
What I'm saying,
How can you?

You are you, and not I

XLI

The Lord, we are told,
Protects drunks and fools
I drink from the air
And from the streaming light

I drink the cloud patterns
As they change each instant
I hold up to the wind
Both my hands, though little arrives

XLII

I await the redemption
From the kingdom of money,
I await the renewal
Of Being and of Time

How can it ever come?
The torrential blood flow,
The lies thickly tangled,
The last occlusion of mind

XLIII

Instructor, the
Lies then with
Which they
Encircled you,

The one signal
Lie, but then
Numerous others,
Crowds instinct

With falsehood,
As though
Breathing it
Out, the

Stench
Of the human,
Each person
A crowd –

Swaying, clinging
To the next,
Scarcely able
To stand

In vertiginous
Delusion, mendacity
Seething, staggering
Weight of the unreal

XLIV

The end of
The culture
Of greed
And of delusion,

The end of the
Regime
Of torture
And of money,

The advent
Of justice,
The coming
Of mercy,

The appearance
Of the teacher,
The true one,
The guide

XLV

Seething darkness
Of non-space
And no time
Where thought has its end

Glimmering well
Of night echoes
Filled with stars,
Absence of light

Itself light,
No time and
No speech to
Grasp or to clarify

Active innumerable
Unstable points
Filling
The uncontained

XLVI

Burning, elusive,
The near empty
Book of dreams,
That these your life

Now all just
Barely, barely remembered
Here it was, and
There, and then

And all the times
In small fragments, brief
Vaguest of images,
Voices sometimes also

XLVII

You who have
Guided me
From there to here,
You who shall

Guide me
From here to tomorrow,
Through the sand routes
No footprints

Can last in, the
Stone waste,
The desert of
The death sun

And the scorpion

XLVIII

What is my name?
Is it written
Here on the chart,
The plastic band

On my wrist?
Or is it
Written in sand,
Through the infinite sojourn?

XLIX

Hail fellowship
Of holy earth!
Holy and holiest Light,
Your infinite

Onstreaming,
Unceasing illumination,
The endless
Procession of skies

That you raise
And fill out with
The absolute splendor of
Clearing expanding space –

Openness opened now
Of emptiness reborn, redeemed,
The inexhaustible newness,
Endless novelty of sight

L

Light wave or
Light particle,
The sovereignty
Of light –

As in
Lightning –
Surpasses
All substance

LI

Logos, your
Being transcends
Every being,
The self that you are

Is filled bright
With an emptiness
Made splendid
By sheerest ubiquity

LII

Sun above these rooftops
And the day is
Streaming atoms
Of light, blinding

And white blue seas,
My eyes are put out,
And yet I walk along,
Cinder of a man

Stricken, upright,
Nevertheless feeling
This elemental mind
The radiant bright waves

LIII

You are the empty day
Filled with infinite dreams,
I move through it
In hope and fear
That they come true

On these two open hands
Pour down strange substance – Light,
Overwhelming and subtle influence
Bringing both hope and fear

LIV

Radiant king, my sovereign,
Light itself, you are
The open secret, shelter me
In the chaotic dark

I must come back
From shedding every skin,
Abandoning my shell
Of nearly lived-in life

LV

Passing breezes gratifying
To breathe, not to the eye
--look for what can't be seen,
Even not be found

Moving, stirring although
Within this -- dim margin
Set upon the living soul
That it come close,

But yet not touch

LVI

Moths out at night,
A fragile thing
Made of paper,
Feathers, silk

The open night
Receives it,
Unlimited and
Always famished

LVII

Night lightning
And the flash
Breaks open
What was sealed

If only
It would last
So that I might
See into,

And see through

LVIII

I breathe and so
I hope, and light
Suffuses me, I fill
With aspiration

I feel power,
A perilous
Insight comes,
Uncertainty as well

What can be done,
What ventured,
And what said?
Nothing, the voices

Crying
In the wind
Call out, crying
They call out nothing

LIX

Illuminator, I
Have sought
For you, have I sought
For you in vain?

Where do you exist?
The sky rings
With your power, a
Light suffuses everything

The world burns
In brightness,
And every object shines
As though with an inner light

LX

Instructor, crucified,
You come forth
From your cross,
An emanation

From its darkness
As though light
Should come from shadow,
As though life

Should come from death
Redeemer, crucified
Yet reigning
From the gallows tree,

Your hands are nailed
And yet you hold them out
For all to come, for all
To be embraced, to see

Envoy

There is a darkness
Remaining inside
The candle's light
Often not seen

And yet it is there

There is an absence
Inside the
Shimmering flame
It is not what it is

There is a doubt
In the mind
Of even believers at prayer
A shadow falls over me

I am not what I am

THE STAR OF REDEMPTION

I

Redeemer, I can never
Feel you
Near me, I seek
For life's renewal yet in vain,

Although I want to
Know you, perhaps I sense
That You
Are near me now and then

You circulate
And are a part
Of the city
Of men and women

Yet exist
Elsewhere,
Somewhere.
Where?

Sun above buildings, the
Trees move
With the wind

What moves
Inside of men,
Inside of women,
In the time below?

I am an exile
Here in the earthly city
What can I be
In the Heavenly
City above?

II

There is
Something
After death
For I

Believe
In life
Eternal
Yet life is

Here and now
Is this
And nonetheless
Is still the bright Redeemer

III

Redeemer
Often it is said
You exist
Elsewhere

Where I often
Wonder, where?
And yet
Is it not the case

That I have
Seen your image
Many times?
In the light

In the street
In the faces
Of the others,
The souls that I have met

IV

In the day
And even in the light
In the rain at times
And sometimes

Alone
In the middle
Of the night
Fears take me

Redeemer
Scatter the darkness
From around me
Save my life

For yet
A little while
If only that
I have the time

To listen more
To learn, to work
To do what must be done
To bring about the Kingdom

V

The soul of
Some
Is like a rose
Of faith

More-than-human
Perfection
Is hidden
Within soft silk

Delicate beauty
Holding
What holds
But can't be held

VI

The light
Of the world
Bathes the world
Entirely

Yet
What is beyond
The world beyond the light
Is what I see

VII

Mystery of forgiveness
This it can
Never be told is
Always

The mystery of mysteries
There is no
Way to live
Apart from this

Moment of bright
Light invisible and
Dawning in the
Startled gaze

I have never never seen
The world before I feel
Apart from this, apart from this
There is no life

VIII

Usefulness
To others Redeemer
Grant us
This one great thing

So often
We have been
Mere single minds
Absorbed entirely with self

Oneself
The center and
Circumference everything
Yet now

We want to bring
The Other to
Our world
The other's voice to be heard

IX

Strength may yet
Again fill
The body
And the soul

What light
What breeze
What spoken words
Will make you whole?

X

A shadow
Is cast from
The light around you
See it on the ground

Yet from
The light within
Is there a shadow?
From the voice within
A sound?

XI

Deep in the dream
Of life we yet
Will hear a
Sound not recognized

At first you
Hesitating listen
Close and closer
The inward ear

The inward eye
The hidden from
The day and deeper
Consciousness

XII

Reality of prayer
And when I act
I take the pattern
Of the fable

Rather than the world
The world is
Way too busy too
Noisy and unreal

XIII

Unheard of light
Illuminates the darkness
All around and also
Shines within

Each single thing
Each small event
Shines likewise in
Your face your glance

XIV

In the world
There are two powers
One is time
And one is prayer

Time is a candle
Melting down
Within and prayer
The candle's flame

Though the candle
Burns down lower
Its heat and light
Are still the same

XV

Radiant King
In the darkness
Of my room
You bring me light

Unearthly sun
Illuminates
The grains of night
Now streaming down

I raise my hand
And feel the dark
Around me boundless
Voiceless without sound

XVI

The Lord took
Loaves and fishes
Multiplied them
Many times

From wicker baskets
Came forth plenty
From light and air
There comes enough

XVII

Without the touch
Of charity
Which of us
Could live a day

Without the light
Of grace
Without the radiant
Forgiveness

Which of us
Could say one word
To justify
The lowest place?

XVIII

When we have fears
we abdicate the self
The soul
Is taken over

By a wave of
Brimming inward peace
That rises up within
Each breath but deepens it

XIX

The light we hold
Within is
Powerful within
They say the voice

Within is
Powerful as well
Yet what is great
Is sometimes

Difficult to grasp
To know
And so my hands
Are shadows

Seeking other shadows
My eyes are
Pools of darkness
Seeking others' light

XX

Those who have
Gone before
Must know the way
Those who have

Risen through
The darkness
Here below
The dwelling

Of the grave
And that before
The grave and those
Who have gone before

Must know the way

XXI

In the garden of Gethsemane
Olive trees and their shadows
Moving with the night wind
Carrying sweet fragrance

Radiant King hidden
In the garden, amid its
Twisted branches
Its agitated leaves

A single light
Amid profuse and
Multiplying shadows, dark
And darkest shadows, many

XXII

We do not want
To be as supplicants
In the kingdom
Of the Lord

But stand
In the spirit bravely
With what we are
With what we've done

Not for any pride
But only to pursue
The elusive sole integrity
The secret responsibility

XXIII

If a smile
Is a type of light
Then what
Is light itself?

Particles or
Waves it cannot be –
It too must be a visage
It too must be a face

XXIV

The other comes
To me asking
For my speech
My gaze for me

The other comes
Asking or imploring
He is not an angel
Walks or stumbles

Sometimes
Cannot stand
Has a name I cannot say
Speech I do not understand

XXV

What is the name
Of beauty, if
Beauty has a name?
Why is it with us

In the world?
What does it
Call us to? and with
Such vocative insistence

But there may be
Another beauty
Like and unlike this
There may be something else

That calls us to an
Otherwise and elsewhere,
Beauty beyond beauty,
Beyond being, beyond sense

XXVI

My words are
Either too much
Or too little
They never seem quite right

How can they capture
What is here or,
Still less, what is not?
How can they

Do justice to
The visible,
Still less
To invisible light?

Holy and mystical night
Supernatural love
Purest essential light
Sent to me from above

Sent to me here below
Into my separate place

XXVII

I do not know
If I can be
The thing I want
New dispensation

A man is limited
One attempts
And yet the attempt
May come to naught

I ask the secret
Gatherings
To lend assistance
As I shape myself

XXVIII

A man is
In the world
For only
A short time

The world
Speaks in and
Through his thoughts
His words his deeds

Yet who
Is speaking
Finally? Who
Will speak at last?

XXIX

Where have the dead
Gone to? They
Never can be seen
Or heard

They are
Departed it
Is said they are
No longer here

Apparent absence
Resonating
In the bare heart
Of elsewhere

XXX

Much feared death
You are not mine
You are a limit
I cannot cross

I see but do not
See I know
But do not know,
None except one Other

Knows where I go

XXXI

Death is the
Ultimate privacy
None can help
None can follow me

In death I
Am myself alone,
Long eons
Before the time I was

Long ages
After the time I am
Perhaps will be
As they had been

Except that
In between there was
The moment of
This one pure concept

XXXII

Luminous echoes
Of the lamp lit page
Bits of revealed light
At the fingertips

Assembled as though
From a bracelet
The unknown constellation
Obscured with starlight

XXXIII

We have no choice
But to recall
What was predicted
And shall befall

We must recur
To the written voice
The written image
We have no choice

XXXIV

I try to find
Right tones
Of voice to use
What notes to strike

What is the right
Way to bring
My living mind
To him or her

And theirs to mine
They must be
Recognized
Singular whole

XXXV

Thinking of
The vocation
Of listening
Not speaking

Thinking of
The dedicated
Finding
Of the thread

Leading
To what is locked
And to the hidden
Leading on

XXXVI

I am attentive to
The movement of
The mind among
Its thoughts

The echoes of
Others' voices
There as well
The presence

Of the other
Before me
The feeling
Of him or her

When they are there
The memory
Of either when
They are gone

Envoy

What I write now
No one will see
I write it anyway
The angels will copy it

STATEMENTS

Return and Address

I returned to my homeland
In a time of oppression
I witnessed the debasement of culture
The deprivation of humanity
For the sake of bankers and the rich

Few things were given to me
And yet some few things were
I sat in a classroom and listened
I was able to use a well-run library
Friends sprang up in my path to help me
In the devastation of the winter
that is the North American state
The hopeful spirit of the human grew stronger somehow

You who were not there
You who were not born yet,
You who did not know me
Nor care about my life nor about my death
I write these notes for you

The enemies of humanity
Deserve no quarter
Nor do they give it
They must be destroyed

They are scum and rabble
They are human garbage
They are piles of shit

Lying in the American pig sty
The Chinese pig sty, the British pig style

The enemies of humanity
Are all around you
See them, watch them
They must be destroyed

They are human vermin
They are impacted stool in the rectum of history
They are urine in the catheter of the ages
They are less than men, less than women
they are scum they are rabble
they are human garbage

Destroy them
Have no compunction
Have no fear and have no mercy
Do not look back

They rape your wife in front of you
They prostitute your daughter

The senator defends them, the judge supports them

THIS IS THE PIG, KILL THE PIG

They hack your son to death with machetes
Another's is a multiple amputee

**THE SENATOR DEFENDS THEM, THE JUDGE
SUPPORTS THEM**

This is the pig, kill the pig

You who read this

Do you know what I am referring to?
You who read this
What have your teachers said to you?
What have your history books repeated?
What lies are swarming inside of you like maggots?

How harshly I speak
It is true, I must admit
But consider, I have seen
An entire continent destroyed
In my own lifetime I have seen this
I have seen whole countries massacred
IN MY LIFETIME I HAVE SEEN THIS
I have seen the earth and all the elements
Polluted, rendered unfit for human beings
Rendered unfit for anything
In my lifetime I have seen all of this

Freedom you say
Freedom freedom freedom
Or else governance compliance
How I despise your freedom
And your compliance both
Let me shove them up your ass
Little more needs to be said of these ideas
How small they are, how shriveled
Shrunken hard and dry
How shallow and how nothing
How absolutely nothing
What is freedom compared to life itself
What is compliance compared to a human mind
What are either compared to a human body
I want nothing of your freedom
Nor of your governance, compliance
I do not need them, I have truth instead

Concepts

Walking back from the university library in the evening
I consider the greatness of the Islamic people:
Greatest of polymaths, visionaries
Of geometrical perfection, and yet physicians too,
Inhabitants of the most austere of places, the desert,
Learning by this means the virtues of restraint,
Of conservation, consultation, fidelity:
Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Averroes and Avicenna.

Walking back from the hospital after visiting a friend
I consider the greatness of the Jewish people:
Initiators of the historical imagination,
Responsive to all ethical questions,
And without compromise, reminders: Karl Marx,
Franz Rosenzweig, Emanuel Levinas, Simone Weil.

And I consider the greatness of the Polish people:
Most dedicated artists of the theatre,
Finely discriminating in music, greatest
Of modern logicians, decipherers
Of the Enigma machine, and so by this means
Victors over the Third Reich: Marian Rejewski,
Alfred Tarski, Chopin, and Jerzy Grotowski.

Walking back from the concert in the afternoon
I consider the greatness, also, of the German people:
Greatest in scholarship, deepest philosophers,
Profoundest visionaries of Western music: Beethoven,
Mozart,
Johannes Brahms, Johan Sebastian Bach.

Sensei

A boxcar train into the rainy night.
My teacher is there, sleeping on cardboard,
All of his possessions in a sack.
Boxcar train into the rainy night.

My teacher seldom spoke, yet moved with ease.
He was from the land of cherry trees, snow white
In springtime; and, in autumn, all the boughs
Flash sun-gold, crimson, and light green-pink.

One time my teacher told me that our landscape
Brought back the memory of his so much
That he just had to stay: in summer he pruned trees,
In winter shoveled snow from people's walks.
One time a man said 'Don't get Jap smell in my house.'
Sensei was a master of Aikijitsu, but all he told me was the
man was sick.

To You

I hope that one day people will refer to me
Not really by my last name very much
But mostly by my first. I think
That's all that's needed in my case. Likewise
I am not professor, doctor or anything like that,
But only Steve (I write it here this way,
As I did when I was young.)
And likewise we are told
That Ernesto Guevara
Took the name of 'Che'
Which really means just 'pal,'
Or sometimes even "hey."
It's not, certainly, that I compare myself
To this great man
But only that the spirit inside
Is somewhat similar. And so
I'm simply Steve, the one
You've known forever, who is writing to you now.

Scars

Considering myself as a circumcised man,
I wonder what it would have been
To have that part of me
That was removed at birth. Some
Think that this idea is a kind of joke, and yet,
Consider, I feel almost nothing
During intercourse – an energy is there,
A physical power, and
A desire as well, moving, searching, focusing –
And yet no feeling: the way
That someone very drunk, or very cold,
Will feel their lips or fingers. At times,
As though with just the fingertips of memory,
I can just barely grasp
The way that I once was when I was young –
Full of living energy all quite vividly there,
Open and alive through every part, seeing
So clearly, where now my sight is blurred,
Hearing so sharply,
Where now my ears just ring,
And feeling, there, and then, the one incomparable gift,
Where now I blunder at it,
Like someone novocained.

To Academic Critics

While sitting here absently I spy a book
Half-hidden on a cluttered bathroom shelf.
With nothing other to amuse myself,
Just idly I decide to take a look.
I find that's it's a novel by Conrad,
An honored name that always makes me glad --
Notromo, a tremendous masterpiece.
But with an introduction by Leavis.
O academic numbskull, F.R. Leavis,
I wish that you and yours would kindly leave us.
Your stupid essay nearly makes me sick,
So pompous and so solemn-imbecilic
I'd rip it out and wipe my ass with it,
But we don't wipe ourselves with shit.
Therefore I say, depart from me, ye cursed.
Though yet of all shit published, yours is still not the worst.

YOUTH AND AGE

YOUTH

I

Three bottles on the windowsill
Damp sill
and also one beer can
Mist morning
white
shade no light
yet to read palms by
only to see you, yes you sleeping there
Air damp and cool through the screen
gold in your hair

II

Early in the morning
The fog still, the white town
is asleep still
until
who knows
Sun a pen light past a green roof's edge
slip stream of pearl
oh my girl yes my my girl
love to touch you
your

softest skin softer
than any crème you use
and where I'm not too
soft sometimes
I flow right through you
like crème through a tube

III

Window shade
is light blue
in the morning
maybe damp with the dew
in the early morning
full of pearl mist
with the sun's knitting needles
pushed through
And I am
thinking of you
been awake all night
or just about
Yes this is what I do
They say
that it will pass
one day
just like the dew
itself but I must say
that I don't really
want it to
I get up
to write your name
in cold dew traces
on the window's glass

and when the sun shines through
it will have burnt away
But I'll still think of you
all day long and every day

IV

Well sexuality's sort of a cliché
now anyway,
don't you think?
I sort of do
I sort of like to anyway,
you know...though
don't really dance much,
but I sometimes do

V

And so but then
these girls, I just can't take it
at all
I...I...
I feel like I live
in the space between
door jamb and wall
in that space between blind and blind
right

between left and right
up and down
Don't know
where to go
in this way too confusing town
Back off, slow down
she says
when I'm half way through the door
I don't know what at all to say
as I roll onto the floor
Who, what
are these girls
anyway?

VI

And so if I want to spend
all my time
messaging around
with some rhyme? –
well that's just me
And who knows, who can say
that any way
that I spend my day
is wrong
if I end up with –
if I make the day and then the night
sometimes so dead and really so boring and wrong
come out right and end up in –
a song

VII

So many things
ticking away
inside a day
inside a factory let's say
inside a mind
that's really thinking
and at least part way in gear,
at least sometime –
a minefield mind,
and maybe more than one
is ticking in a day
like a ripe melon
in the hot hot sun
Put your ear
to it sometimes –
what does it say?

VIII

Lying on the floor
just lying here
waiting for the door
to open just part way
waiting for someone – who? –
to step on through

Lying on the floor
I'm waiting here
for the blinds to crack right open
and the light to appear –
sun yolk breaking through its shell
without a chick

--just like me

Lying on the floor,
yes I'm waiting for
the day to flash
its smile on the wall
and maybe someone
sometime today might call

IX

I am so low and I'm
So blue because I
Just can't get along
Without you, without you

You have everything
That day and night declare
Essential to me
You are light and
Everywhere you are
Is where I have to be

Without you
I have nothing,
Won't you give?
Without you
I can just just
Barely live

Without you
I can't feel, I
Need your touch
Without you yes
I've lost so much

Without you –
And I'm waiting
patiently

Without you
I am blind, O
Can't you see?

X

Wanted to call her up
the other day
wanted to feel
her touch
What is there
left to say?
Well you
might actually
assert –
you know
she is such a flirt,
she really is
it really is a shame
And even just the sound
of her name
makes my heart
stop and then start
again oh yes
Love is a long
long chain
heavy and endless

XI

Morning smiles
on the wall
and shows its teeth
but the blinds
will knock them out
Teeth gone
mouth still gaping wide
it's the whole wall
now where the leaves rush
like nurses
flurrying all around
Emergency
of morning rush hour
night is trampled down
stamped to death
I am paying
with a hangover
like an iceberg –
so much more
beneath the surface
of my throbbing head
Yes, woke up this morning
almost found myself dead

AGE

I

Breeze from the lake
this is the first
country once again
I come back

Here are the
memories of
snow and the
windblown streets

Bright autumn
when we've
drunk down
quarts of
local beer

Those were
the days and
now old friends
are dead

The undertaker
and the
collection agent
now and now

The place is
taken over
by real estate developers
the money men

And by those
squatters on
the public charge
the military establishment

Breeze
from the lake
this is the first
country once again

II

I am the suspect and
quite bad relation
the marginal person
of no account

I have come
back from
dubious adventures
overseas

Or some such
thing
I am the joker
shuffling the deck

But think: those long
long days ago
the days of
innocence and inspiration

Days when we were young

III

I am the
observer
the wanderer
getting on in years

living in
a small room
without employment
looking for

a government
handout
lots of luck in this
the age

of universal fascism
those who are
in the pay of uncle sam
get rich

those unemployed
are shit

IV

What can you do
now middle aged
and then some
unemployed

little money
in the bank
no health insurance
yet

in other countries
there would be
as well as
means to make good use

of such as we

V

I despise now
all the magazines
I ever read
those lying forms

Shaping the mind
behind their scenes
to heed
what is not real

VI

I am the maladroit
and quite embarrassing
a marginal person
of no account

who has come
back
from non-standard
and dim adventures

or some such
minded crap
I am the one
who took alternative approaches

those long long
days ago
our days of
innocence and inspiration

Days when we were young

VII

All I regret is
all the books
I never read
those never-lying forms

moving the mind
behind the scenes
to heed
the truly real

VIII

Images of
a vivid mind
imagination
as it's called

The only true
instructor of the soul
the steel to
every limb

IX

When you were gone
I put away your
voice now it is
silent still I do not

see or feel you anymore
I am no longer capable
not so much
because I can't

as that my
situation
with no money
coming in

looking in the streets
for some stupid job
will not allow me
thought for this

X

Sere autumn leaves
And even so
My bills are
Still unpaid

I register
Therefore this
Fugitive beauty
Living there beyond me

XI

This is the end of my rope
For I have
Set my store in
Ashes and
My light is short

I have not known
The days of spring
Or if I have
I have forgotten them

And now perforce
I must await
The limited days
The dark unnumbered nights

XII

I have thrown down
My youth my strength
And now my health
I have come back to you

My origin can you
Now help me to
Again be well? – now
can you renew me?

XIII

These are the days
In waiting and so
Lonely here
Restore me

You unlimited skies
You bright and
Onward streaming clouds
Bring back my strength again

XIV

Breeze from the lake
And even here
The hopeful hint
Is sometimes known

Beyond the limits
Of our life
Just past the dark wall
Of our night

XV

When the dark days
Have come and there's
No beauty anymore
We look upon the fields

The clouds
That fill the sky
The luminous
White country

Of our home

XVI

And so again
I must come back
To see the
Bright cloud tatters

And the illuminated
Lake at sunrise
And sunset I must
Come back to it

Fortune may yet
Still help me out
And I myself conspire
To summon the inner power

XVII

Illuminator, Light, I can never
Feel you
Near me, I seek
For my renewal once again

Again I want to
Know you – perhaps I sense
Or even feel that
You are in me now and then

You circulate
And a are part
Of the city
Of men

Yet originate
Elsewhere
Somewhere
Where?

Sun above buildings, the
Trees move
With the wind

What moves
Inside of men,
Inside of women
In the time below?

XVIII

Sun above the rooftops
And the day is
Streaming atoms
Of lightning, blinding

O white blue seas
My eyes are put out
And yet I walk along
The cinder of a man

Stricken upright
and nonetheless feeling
Though somewhat numbed
The radiant bright waves

XIX

You are the empty day
Filled with an infinite dream
I move through it in fear
Lest it come true or not

On these two open hands
Pour your true substance down
Overwhelming splendid light
Bringing both hope and fear

XX

Radiant king my sovereign
Light itself, you are
The open secret shelter me
Amid the seething dark

I have come back
From shedding every skin
Abandoning my shell
Of nearly lived-in life

XXI

Passing breezes gratifying
To breathe though not the eye
Look for what can't be seen
Even cannot be found

Moving stirring although
Within this is the margin
Set upon living souls
That they come close, yet cannot touch

XXII

The end of every living thing
Is death so it is said
Yet I am living even so
I am not dead yet still am dead

I walk into the opening
Of the future it is dark
Even though I cannot see
I look into streaming light

XXIII

Burning witness of the day
That dies past the hill
the sun is low it yet
sparks into me and burns

flaming hair lights the evening
external light declines
in my heart an ember
A cinder of a sun

XXIV

Moth out at night
A fragile thing
Made of paper
Feathers and silk

The open night
Receives it
Unlimited and
Always famished

XXV

Night lightning
And the flash
Breaks open
What was sealed

If only
It would last
To see into
To see through

WORDS

City

Across rooftops
game board
of the city
in open spaces

between
the dwellings of men
the early sun's
compass leg

across bright
spotlights
the ice puddles
on roofs

the canyons
between buildings
snow rug alleyway
with trash cans

in the street where
my love
must walk
in the street

where
at dawn
a dog's cry
is heard

Winter, Late Afternoon

Four o'clock bright winter sun
along the building's edges
pink winter light

building tree shadows
in copper
are black bars
set crosswise

shadow-grating
ruled
against the illuminated
pavement

the bare tree
bristle of twigs
arteries and veins
on pavement-aura
streaming

Four o'clock
bright winter sun

Winter Afternoon

The high sun
illuminates the
building side
across

windows blue
and sparking
pieces of the sky
sun slashes

No shadows anywhere
everyone
has bright steam
around their heads

The over-exposed
store fronts
bleached in glare
the road shining

Street Corner

Third floor window
past the blinds
I see the lead pipe street
where I will walk

And the others
already down there
walking
their shadows

A group
at the corner
disperses
like a starburst

Each to his own direction
no glances back
each one hunched
in his own life

The Cold Street

Cars at a stoplight
in luminous mist
pearl exhaust fumes
windows sparkly fogged

The street
is a piece of gray stone
with lichens of salt
traffic light still red

Sun is bright
in a blue sky
there is light
above confusions of the street

There is always light

Looking

Prints in morning snow
glassy meal underfoot
stained with ochre urine
excrement mud

Steps confused
with each other trampling
over each other
rush hour's fossils

A bodiless swarming
it is ten o'clock
where are they?
the snow is falling

On black branches
a few leaves hanging
here, there
what am I looking for?

There is something
in the light
although
the light is gray

There is someone
on the street
even though
it is empty

GNOSIS

Tree

Pale blue snow
and ice face moon,
fir tree blinds
rope off
the pulsating
light disc

Water serpent
shadows
on lilac, a
gust through the sails,
empty
the rowers' benches –
and the opening sea road

A Given Day

Sun pupil
in the blue puddle,
depths of sky

Sun powder
dusting the red of the building's face
pink. Glorious light
for the end!

Glorious glorious light
for the end!

Night Mountain

Light threads
from beyond the mountain's brim
bright lashes on
an eye socket

the ruled lines
of night

On the Face of the Earth

Light feels for
my eye
behind my lid
red black pulse

of light pulp
inside my brow
echo chamber prickling
of sand grains

I drink down the sun
through the straws
of vision

I open my chest
to the day
on the face of the earth

Old Town

Rain smoke
above the chimneys
white balls strung out along
above roofs

Black roofs shiny
wet buildings wet streets
old factories

open garages
cry out

Her Room

White black tile
dim light
a chess board
with shadow men

shadow kings looming
the gods
float through dimness
in the corner

A Tree

Street-tunnel
leaf-edged
moon medallion
on the tree's chest

Time portal
of light
past the sway of leaves
beacon

of earth storm

Night

Earth-coal dropped
through
the dry well
of space

horizon-char
amber and yellow
light points
in the cobalt

there are echoes
but no sounds

Stars

Candle wicks lit
in the depths
of space-time
and moths circling

Rain falling to the dark
well's surface
almost entirely silent
though visible so long

eons of deception

On a Balcony

I

On a balcony
whose gold light spills
its amber yellow up
into the wide night sky,
I am waiting for the Angel
of Harmony
and of Essential Solitude
to fall on me,
and I am waiting for the city
like a bed of coals
to grow cooler, the streets less
shimmering with noise,
with heat blur vibrations;
yet neon embers glare
between burning crevices,
and still the sky pours ink
over the long street's wounds.

On a balcony
whose doors let in the night air
from the east
I cannot stop or wait
for what is caught
inside of me to stop.
All must keep on.

A whispering
of wind's sand grains
through the palm leaves
spells the char of thought
where it,
mated with the light,
would only irritate
the eye.

And what is there without
that might somehow be within? –
self after self, strata of a life,
of I, me, my –
of a life alone –
are rubbed away, rubbed off,
until a sort of incense cone
of light
is left, a small thing yet waiting
for a match from far off in the night.

II

I float
into the lake
as constellations rise
beneath the boat
where I must hold
a storm lamp
to a pane of glass.
Stilled water of the heavens,
time-spotted, luminous,
creates a pool above the world
where quick events,

reflected, told, untold,
are glimmered back
into each other
and the letter sealed,
and a moth's eyes
lit with candles
far in the night's skies
shine out to us
within the flame
that melted this wax
into a seal here on my hand,
after burning it.
Yet this was a candle lit
whose flame
was coveted
by the clamorous agitation
of moth wings
that yet would not come near
from where they are,
or rather where they were,
tens of millions of years long past.

III

I am
like a leaf
upon the tree
of midnight where
it branches from
the moment now,
that single stem
of time,
outward to eternity,
and all its branching leaves
from this point here
to everywhere --
which is the root
of that same stem:
this single tree
of manifold
and bright confusions,
of numberless
and yet not numerous illusions,
questions --
gathering in space,
distributed in time.
I am this single
yet not simple thing
talking to you now,
speaking in this rhyme.
I sound it in the ear
of your mind and heart,
I drop it there
like a pebble
into a still pool,
so that the complications

that I threaten to become
are summed up far inside
that one motive
from which the many hide.
For in this,
I and you –
within a rhyme
that comes forth then,
the single understanding
from the many things,
a single complex meaning
from two words –
there is the single woman
and the single man,
though made of many women
and of many men.

WORLD FRAGMENTS

Rain expressed from the blue green arc of night
Is masked within the parchment bridges of lit water
Where the rusted nails of the ashen tree
Exfoliate in burning and white calcium sand dunes.

Petals of the bride and of the groom
Flushing in maelstroms down the blackened drain
Bring forth the morphine of peace and hope,
Bright coma of near death and shadow bars.

Lustrous and luminous night, you come to me
And bring the hourglass of deep intoxication,
Grains of the wide stigmata narrowed shut

With tunneling reciprocating vines;
Hair of green grass is burnt by extravagant wind
And snow in the epaulets of fir trees glows
like frozen light.

In autumn the sky is opened with bright clouds of smoke
Rising from the burning apples boughs,
The copper threads of crab apple arteries
Fill with the water of uncounted streams.

Aureolas of sunset tint the bruises of the earth;
The hidden clotted blood condenses, stills,
And yet the hibernating milk-white sun
Gathers its sulfur yoke in frost-paned shells.

Renewal gathers seeds into its bag,
Soaks them in wine and vinegar and breaks
The bleeding side of frost-webbed ground.

Spiders of the hidden and essential light
Knit up their curtains of the soon-to-be
In knotted tendrils of green lakes and hills.

The fire freezes the sticks to powder white
And dusts them with pale flour of dream ash
Where tangled roads of charcoal meet the sun
That's drawn into the glowing pulp of light.

The freezing waves of heat come from her hair
Perfumed with hourglass vials, cigarette burnt holes;
Glorious profusion as she breaks apart
Into the avid fingers of my hands.

Rain soaks through the eyelids of the soil
And closes every eye in the ravening still earth;
Voices of the trees have ceased to speak,

The leaves break into fragments of bright sun,
And yet the black tree bark is stripped
From the bare ground, opening up the searing frigid heart.

Streams flush the color of the horse's eyes,
Blood breaks apart within the cherry's stem,
White skin is petals that are flaked away
In clear and cold rain in the house of night.

The opulent center of the falling sun
Turns all the tree banks gold, old burnished coins
Are now the stuff of landscape, and the hills
Are tarnished with a copper aura.

Within the salamander tree the fire still burns;
It freezes bright in winter in the burning cold
And sweats its leaves out in the summer sun,

Its mirror image buried in the earth
Among the never-to-be-seen-again,
Lucent in the poisonous and weighted dark.

Green lava of the cornfields in the early light,
When the sun is knitting the dark ground a veil
Of luminous stained glass, each stone shines clear
And every hand of clover is raised up.

Wheat tolls its brushes sweeping the dark off,
The morning sounds are active with bright dew
And dogs begin to chase their stretched out shadows,
Their shadow-legs like insect mandibles.

The grass is greener now than green can be
Although it still shines copper in a cube of light
That sets its bled cranberry across hills.

Chimneys are still like paper bags in color;
A few windows spark, flare; time of the earth,
Ciborium of renewal and of burnt green blood.

Woven branches are the worms that glow at night
In the dark blue green of supernatural snow;
A fire in the canticle of forests where the insects
Gather and disperse and lost ones live again.

In the eye of the bobcat are yellow amber
Clocks made of sand dunes starving the hourglass;
A traveler left his two shoes, full of blood –
The gully near the river; the wash of white stones.

Three pine cones in my leg; and if I were
Another I could hardly walk; but nothing
Can kill me now, for I am dead already.

An actor in the mouth of the bright stage
Is full of a dark demeanor; and as he speaks
He hears the bight applause of pouring sand.

There are bridges upside down in the bright sun
That floats like golden mantle through our severed heads.
These wobble and shiver, cut off by the bright rail;
The cirrus clouds are frozen in the mercury blue.

Then we disappear only to pop up again,
Brown fogged-up mirror depth with cords
Of lichen-colored yardage in gunmetal gray.
Your hat is a bright red. I don't have one.

Traffic moves along its strip of tin;
Pedestrians are hunched in cold
The way that trees contract upon themselves,

The way that a corpse is frozen in its box.
We walk the bridge back into town. And then
Get drunk, pouring golden beer down both our throats.

The night is a collection of green eyes
With dark and frozen lashes like black ink.
Trees are stiffened fires rising through the ground
Into the crystal of the zero air;

Invisible birds, unseen, motionless, silent
Crowd the branches of the maple tree,
Disembodied souls. The moon gives them its breast.
They take it or they don't. Their wings fill up all space.

The hydra of the muddy ground grasps every step;
There is no other way, the wind-filled woods
Are like two claws that rip you as you go.

The jaws are closing tightly now; the dream
Must soon be over. Then, as though made out of stone,
You'll rise through the misty surface of the lake.

Dust mote galaxies beneath the empty bed
That searches like a burnt ash bush up through
The catacombs of devastated space;
Dead children rise up from the lake.

The ashen fire is reaching through
The midnight trees, making a beacon for the serial killer,
He who delivers all he loves from evil,
From illness and the tight grip of the grave.

Her sheath was tighter than a closed pinecone;
The breath was squeezed out from my lungs
As though I were a rag and she the wringer.

The cattle maculate with rain and mud
Must drown in quicksand ponds; their skulls
Drift up through the sand and water membrane.

Salt water, your tears glimmering in lashes,
And in the glossy magazine the flash bulb
Whiteness of the naked girls; the razor cut
Of gathering desire across both eyes:

She is all gold and moves like pipe smoke
In a room of stillest air; her arms are green
Tendrils and her legs are like saplings;
She is the gold green light beyond the hill.

Her bright form burning through the air, your sweat
Still comes; you're like a tree caught in a cold sun shower;
Indigo of midnight burned you brown,

You touched the remnant of your open wound.
Bleeding is part of life; the rain comes down,
And hail is the size of peppercorns.

There is a sun-slash hidden in her eyes.
She looks at you with lightning;
The rain comes down in rivers and the banks
Will overflow and run with silken mud.

Clear water of green rain, the air peaches,
And dark brown ale is served with misted grapes;
The beach of salt leavings inundates
The tongue; hands grasp the quick dissolving foam.

Green weed to wrap around the sunlit throat,
And she is standing in the waves, a part
Of them; go to her now; be drowned in her,

The burning salt will scour the earth from you,
The blood yolk sun engender you again
Even as she knots your wreath of weeds so tight.

The apple of the peach, the plum of fig,
The barley of the wheat and beans of corn,
The sight of hearing and the smell of touch,
The dryness of all sweat, the bath of light –

The four leaves of the three-leaved clover,
Here the tree of grass and here the water soil,
Heat with no fire and the fevered cold,
The bread of water and the drunk down loaf.

The winter of the year is springtime too;
It burgeons in the heart as gold rain falls –
Green torrents of the mud black spring,

The wheat of time burns timeless
As it grows into the heart of every heart,
And the wide sunflower turns round toward the light.

The holds the gold of sun in her dark form
Like the golden grains of corn within its sheath,
And her inward sheath is dark to bring forth
The molten lightning of the disrobed night.

Ply after threaded ply her hair corn silk
And honey spun to luminous threads,
The clinging dampness so delicate to touch
Divulging secret upon secret to the core.

And yet there is no core; the yellow grains
Like sand on the bright beach are blown away
Into the surf of time, the far blue emptiness

Where the setting and flamboyant sun turns
Luminous waves red, then amber white,
Until they look like stones in dim flat fields.

Her hair was black as black as any ink.
For seven year I wandered in its dark
And undertow, the nibbling jaws around;
I was a fish amid the fastest stream.

And yet her skin was apple blossom
Fairer than any other's could be fair,
I the decipherer of its blank page,
Though nothing really had been written there,

Or rather much had been, but not in words.
In the solitude of night my voice called out
For all the intercession that I dared

To call upon, or else for all the luck.
A night of anguish was my wide midnight
Where I, bewildered, watched, listened, thought.

The sunset burns a hole inside the far tree line
And draws the edge of earth around itself,
Dark urine of snow tint, then an orange gold,
And then the snow is blood-soaked bandages.

Crimson striations twist out from the edge
Of the blood sun, blackened trees shrink
Beneath the opening of empty space;
The field, soot colored, is a cloth set out.

Within the overarching vault of night,
High and broken in small points of stars,
The sky goes on in echo after echo,

The Marianas trench of empty space
Opening beyond the realm of earth,
Into an absolute beyond of earth.

Purple of sky with long sand-colored clouds,
The hills a gold green ochre, long and without
Any road; the hedges and the trees black
Mold-like shapes; the wind is silent, the air is still.

Two deer come out from tangled underbrush.
Dun colored; olive eyes; dropping green olive turds,
Looking, sniffing with damp nostrils, curious
About the empty world, with nothing but the night,

The wind, a storm that's picking up. The grass is black.
A few faint stars are scattered in the sky.
My steps are spongy as I walk along,

The grass is damp and has a chilly smell.
Now the last sun is a red brown rusty smear.
Soon it will be completely dark and night.

Yellow carnations in the room; outside
The green field hums with golden sun;
The light is sheets of tinted glass, solid,
Gold light with white hay in the distance.

White mane of sun heat tangling ochre trees
Where tarred, dusty cicadas saw the light
In splinters, the sharp sparks falling between leaves
That melt into each other in the wind.

Sun round and huge and lemon white
Shooting its shards of radiance in spikes
And steel splinters, hypodermic spurts,

Exclamation points of light italicize
The day, the white blue sky, the windless air,
The insect-eaten pelt of the hot field.

Hot day and the yellow curtain drifts inside,
No screen, just open air and the flies come in;
Hot, hot day and the yellow curtain flows
And wavers in the light occasional breeze.

The gardeners are watering their plots,
No rain for quite a while; the earth is baked;
The earth is like a loaf that's crust is burnt,
Hard, brown and blackened, dust-crumbling.

So hot the yellow curtain burns in light.
A blue fly circles the slow ceiling fan,
The sheet on the bed is damp with sweat.

She's gotten up to take a shower;
A low trickle from the shower head,
And still the yellow curtain waves and drifts.

Foam wavered grass and a body is laid out,
Her legs are valleys where no roads can go,
The trees in the cleft of hills are her pubic hair
The hay in the far field her blond corn silk.

Her breasts are the two small hills nearby,
The sky light blue with heat her light blue eyes;
Sun is her passion and her steady pulse,
The waves of the hills her belly, her faint ribs.

Woman of hill and sun and grass and trees,
Woman of more than woman, invisible
Yet real, real and more than real, everywhere

And everything, the first and the last fruit,
The earth itself, the earth itself laid bare
Beneath our wondering and avid gaze.

Black trees are chestnuts burnt in the sunset's grate,
Black ashes of the sky are white with stars,
The thickly clustered night so full of seeds,
Full of white figures on the blackened page.

The fields are searing in the growing dark,
Nocturnal fires of the night increase,
Reach out across the disappearing hills
And, deepening, sink down into the grass.

The soil changes in the fire's cold,
The dew is like an acid, burning, sharp,
Ravening away the landscape's face –

Rock hill of nose stump, gully of eye sockets,
Furrows of a rib cage, the crease of a lost grin,
Sand banks the remnant teeth in a jaw.

I lie in bed against the cold, the room is dark,
The early morning light a pail of dishwater,
Black coffee in a cup beside the bed
Reflects the dim lamp with a point of gold.

Blue snow has climbed the corners of the window,
Wind tremors the thin pane; wind thunder
In sudden starts that carries dusty films
Of snow across the road. White graphite clouds.

With morning opens all with shadows
And with cold and dark; I cut the bedside lamp:
It's night again. Almost no day at all;

One cannot believe the morning. The world
Can't bring itself to promise light at all,
Can't bring itself to promise anything.

The lemon of the rustling moon is burnt
To spindrift copper in the sea of night;
The Bosc pear belly of the spider climbs
The crotches of the riven, waiting trees.

The words are ciphered in the arteries
Of sun and silted water and the fevered stars
Burning pink in the oak-leaved center
Of the blue, the portent-obfuscated heights.

Darkness fills with the blooming spores of dark,
The seven stars of bright redemption
Flood through the portals of the foundered banks;

Wave upon wave of night fills up the night
Until the galaxies of whirlpools shine
Their crystals through the black ice of the pane.

Sun-sifted wheat divides in bright wind streaks
Where morning's breaking wafer crumbles fine
In stars of pointed light and tear-streaked eyes;
Sea surf of green corn, its foam of amber hair,

Masses its phalanxes of shadow men,
Its beadwork eyes of fine lace-dusty moths
The tint of pencil shavings, its aphid clouds,
Its dark rosaries of the thin mantis.

Save me or do not save me! I am born
Out of the breaking shell of night, obscure
Amid the cracking surfaces of dawn,

Seeking the green weeds of the silent room
Deep in the brothy pond's brown chrysalis
Of flickering translucent arms and legs.

The burning garden fills the smoky night
With rags of incense lit from sticks of grass,
Dark crystals of the tree line flood the pulse
Of breaking-open fragrance and night dew.

Rip off the coverings of earth, tarp after tarp,
Rake the black weed from the balding head,
See how the white rock glows like moonrise
In the turning and opened testament of night.

Rake off the teguments of earthly love;
Deep in the burning glass of time and stars,
You dwindle to a single moth-sipped hole.

And yet the last syringe to gradient the hour
Will bring sun spotted riverbeds of pain
And waited for, the green and rushing flood.

The moth-hung trees with roots like peacock's eyes
Fold their sulfur apples in black chips of straw;
The shreds of leaves drenched in star-netted boughs
Open their million mouths rivaling all tongues.

The books that crowd the trunk with burnt pages
Turn in the rumors of the night's chill dew;
Now everywhere the step of the shut page,
Now everywhere the coin and counted breath.

The night is laden with its freight of stars
That chase the eye beyond the edge of thought,
The earth falls through the rivers of the trees,

The tossing wreathes of kelp we float among
Sink through the hourglass of forest hives,
The crumbling gold detritus of wet leaves.

Hide all my veins beneath the marble floor,
Break them in time then tread on them again.
I am the reliquary left to rust
Amid the chancel of the gold's landscape.

Break all my bones inside the lion's jaws,
Fear me at time of moon-dark or of plague.
I am the angel fallen from his script
And littered under just deserted pews.

Dilaudid gradient of psalm or tea
Gives me my future past inside the green
And kiwi orifice of the cat's one eye,

There where I flee far deep into the rails
That meet in the infinite distance
Of the synapse-dark and racing nebulae.

Pathways of devious and endless script
Mark out the ramifying gravid dark,
Portent-encrusted shadows burn like sticks
Inside the campfire of the fallen sun.

Open the earth denuded of its rind.
Say can the shining radiant book be found
Lost in the dark mandala of intestine
Trails and limitless delimited pathways?

Burning without a fire, we are left
With wet and gelid papers, hanging husks
Of the great, resplendent, sun-like crown

That followed its golden and chaste sponsor
Like an eye that follows light, and all of light:
Flower of sunlight following the sun.

Nettles and brown grass. The color of wet sacks,
And rain-limp wads of timothy, knotted
To a cowlick of soaked wind-tousled hair,
Where matchstick bones of mice in owl cough clumps

Lie underneath wren bone of skull, and teeth
As small as grains of rice; mud-clouded rain
That soaks some meager tails to strips of twine,
Bare raveled like a long lost sleeve or nerve.

And here a nest of urine-colored butts,
Two horse-fly-glitter blue bottles of beer,
Empty, and maybe a floury condom or two.

Two pieces of gray wood, rain-eaten, light
As driftwood, fragments of a long-gone fence,
The hills themselves departing like the mist.

Woman in bed like new apples in a bushel,
The morning throws down sheaves of wheat
As bright as silver coins beneath the golden
And lit basin of the room's tea-honey air.

And roses blooming through the apples' skin
Freckled with amber sugar grains flake petals
Wet as silk button buds, and warm, and cool,
To the moth-like delicate alighting touch.

Trapezoid of grain dust and the cotton
Of lit air display the once-to-be-captured,
The incarnate, mocking and elusive All.

Glories of trees and auguries of leaves
In self-destroying autumn bring no hope –
Except to the soldier drowned in poppy white.

The hourglass drains into the lizard's throat
Where a green silk scarf is spread across the moon
And dark blood vessels the color of snow clouds
Make long their maculae like the sawn wood's nipples.

The grains of light that seed the fireplace,
Like a night city, as you flow darkly in,
Deepen to constellations round her form,
Attending it through all its prone eclipse.

New blood is poured into the amber pond
By hunters who have come from the frost hills –
Menstrual sunset; earliest pained night,

And in the water's fig-shaped tiny rooms,
Translucent green, like the pulp of a white grape,
The antic figures of a new code writhe.

Silk stockings left in the moon are filled with legs
Severed from the sapling's ice-glassed boughs;
The thread-peeled trunk is silver, fabric-rough,
And dropping icy nails like Christ's tears,

Christ who was fed the vinegar of sun
All through His darkening martyrdom
And given the white moon's boulder for his sleep,
Rabbit hole of resurrection for His pains,

And weeping breasts before and afterward,
Sleeps in the wine kept in the manikin's side;
She reaches arm stubs to the ice-faced moon,

Yet bloodstained cloths are roses in the night
Swelling like nipples through the blond wood grain
From which she has been blindly carpentered.

The boat that separates the water's weeds
Into the darkly parted decorative page
Opened, and opened more, its marginalia
Flowering in eddies of illuminated words,

Renders its depths of prophecy, bright or dark,
Felt in each deepening extending stroke,
Ply after ply beneath the guttered light
Where yet the hull itself will never sink,

Even though we put up oars, letting them
Creak and drip and letting ourselves, too, drift
Among the darkened ledgers of the stars

Where bright quick veins of wobbling scattered light
Bring us a promise of bright mystery,
Mysterious and unexpected good.

The perfume rising from your burning hair
Confused with sun silt clouds down near the hills
Fills all your clothes with transient allurements
And all your voluble speech with paradox.

It lights your eyes with talismans of green
Until no cat will dare to cross your path;
You separate all shadows into selves
Then float them in two lunar-breasted streams,

One brought down from the cracked walls of the moon
And one arisen from its baths of ink.
In the end what tones, what colors will be yours?

Dance with me in my arms or do not dance!
Wrapping yourself in cardboard-colored light
As we stand here waiting at the bright truck stop.

The clock face of the sun inside the wave
Wobbles its lion's mane without a face,
Its face with open jaws that flow away
Into pulled tear-like flames, current discards.

Bright oil of the river will not burn
Except for ribbon helixes of light
Endlessly unspooling from a scattered source,
Just as the salmon in their armor veils,

Light twining light within the depths of light
Threading the milk-dipped fathoms of the sea,
Bring fire into wakes, spill phosphorescence,

The oil slick of galaxies that drift,
Swirling, popping – twinkling, luminous,
Without substance, with no aim of it.

The queen Anne's lace of yellow pond mantel
Breaks up its doilies on the row boat's oar;
A sun water seam initials a grained sheaf of wheat
Plunged like a broom to sweep the underworld.

Black cavern trees with green stalagmites
Covering their interrupted mouths where
Two small sunlit torsos, deep elsewhere,
Took their two turns, one throwing, one catching;

Splayed crotches in a shallow ginger cut,
Sunlit and still, lure us to look more close,
But ribbon weeds have bandaged both the oars;

The pond is like a petrie dish grown huge;
Entire climates wait for us below,
Generations we can have no concept of.

The burned-out road is filled with ash and ice
That makes the sunset purple rags burnt up in oil
At its lowest point where the betel nut of sun
Has been chewed over and its juice spit out.

Lips of the iron world are stained with it;
Tell me what I am and I will show you both my hands;
You both come here from very far away;
My hands have also. Unexpected parallel.

The lines that mark the surface of the earth
Flow through my outstretched palms and also yours:
Gold eggs and red bananas, spiked with dirt,

Cover for a time the lines marked in our hands.
But not for long: the clouds of soot-black smoke
Flow on like printer's ink across the sky.

The gold fish in their circular stone pond
Float their long shadows through the spires of gold
In which they sleep like paintings made of gilt
Or glass, resplendent live enigmas in the light,

Their bodies throwing shadows on dark men
Who slide beneath them and then slip away
Onto stone pathways mossed with a dark green,
Yet in the pool the burgeoning of light

Makes crackling serpentine script everywhere,
Splitting the copper bottom of the pool
With arteries and veins torn from the sun,

Bleeding its enigma: a partly visible
And yet absolutely blinding light
Knowing no gold or spires, no shadows, fish, or pond.

Green eyes and towers in the fig's split side
Drop a black ink that wraps the poppy's neck,
And snow that fell past midnight epaulets
The shoulder granite of the pitted sill.

Watch all the children there behind the pane:
Blue transparent faces haloed in plastic bags;
They're looking for the white small dove of ice,
Crystalline work of flight that keeps aground.

Blue worms beneath the flower's plot
Push onward with their peristaltic task
The labor of earth, to lie to crawl to breathe,

But then fatigue cannot quite start itself.
The wounds born in the head and heart,
And unexamined eye, implore the poppy's throat.

Blue poppies wreath the silver snow crust moon
Above the line of coffee-shadowed woods.
Wind hydras search from in, around and out,
And then sink back into their leaf-gold caves.

Crab apple orchards drift through stinging dark.
Apples of sweet-ice fall from them; the wind
Brings up a flock of leaves; fox print chains of snow
Are locking up the cavernous fir trees.

Huge crows are flying all around the night
Like littered paper burnt to a charred black;
They fall on branching trees that look like cement

Arteriograms. The wind can't shake them free
Of their ice stiffening. And yet the hoped-for
Poppies of the moon flow through the sky's wind gutters.

The burlap face of burnt fields in summer sun
Stares back with empty roads, shining white tin,
Into the sweat crawling traveler's emptied heart;
I have no place to go except downward,

Or else I walk into the watery blue
Where my past life comes flowing toward me
Like a dust flood, tops spun by whips of wind,
Toys of the past that blind the eye, break up

In hand to parched-off dirt, crumbled news
Blown to the empty burning light of drought.
Dead attics of the past drop rotted boards

On the deserted stage, the silent road
Where blood-dark shadows seethe amid dry wheat,
Planted long ago, forgotten long ago.

Hardening of the roads' arteries forces
Blue distance down the traveler's throat; he chokes
On his own blood that floods the empty stream
Down near the hanging tree, close by the pond;

The roads of the earth are knotted round my heart
And squeeze it to a diamond in my chest,
It can no longer beat but glitters
With flickerings of beauty, broken shards of light.

Down in the ground, soon I will be there,
Forgotten by the living world above:
Solace my heart with dreams and with white drugs;

These are my only good, my only food,
Bright marrow of eternity sucked from my bones
Into the bright dust sparkling at my feet.

Give me the time back that I wasted now!
Pour it all down my throat like gold urine.
Time's money after all, and I have run clean out;
You businessmen in tailored suits, drink up.

Gold golden hair, medusa of the sun,
I searched your pubic wires loop by loop,
The circuits fusing in my ardent grasp
Until the blood of heaven stained my wrist.

Read me or do not read me, boys and girls.
Open the libraries on Saturday, but late,
So that the luminous peach-colored moons

Can float amid the branches of the trees,
Imitating hanged men of the long-gone times,
The leaves protruding tongues, the bark abraded skin.

In autumn the apples fall into sun streams
Freezing with the trout spots of sunlight,
The pebble bottoms shining brown beneath
The golden leaves that slowly sink to them.

Green moss is yellow along rocks; the deer,
With heavier coats, come out into the clearing's
Burning light, nibbling the just-bare branches
Of the thicket bush; snakes move slower

Toward sun-warmed rocks; cumuli rise high
And bright in early-slanted, deeper radiance;
Fence posts shine sparkling in the morning sun.

Walking the setting world, walk step by step.
Drink water from the clearest wells; brick walls
Grow warm toward noon then slowly cool toward night.

Spider-legged blinds prison stripe your breasts.
The light dust on your silk-and-perfume skin
Shows a faint aura all around your soft, round,
Heavy breasts; your nipples are rouge brown,

Soft, yet slightly tough as well, between my lips,
And now you breathe so differently when I take
Them in my mouth, and suck -- not hard, not hard
To hurt – but hard enough: your chest expands;

Your breath comes quicker then, and slow,
But deeper too, as though you want to take
Yourself in hand, to feel yourself somehow,

Perhaps to feel me, too, somewhere inside.
But really, just right now, you have forgotten me,
Or nearly so, and yet because you love me.

Death comes to take me by the hand, I feel
It come; I feel it nearer to me now
And know – it cannot be avoided, since
It seems to be the time. I could be wrong,

But it is hard to know. Everyone dies.
One often thought that one was not afraid,
And then one day you realize you are.
But now, right now, I don't know what I feel.

The world is different than I thought before.
For it's really not a question of my life,
Like anyone's a quite limited thing;

But rather it's a question of the world.
What has become of it? And what can come?
This troubles me, in body and in mind.

Berries fill the green bush full of panther eyes.
Rhubarb-colored canes with crown-of-thorn pricklers
Hide in ragged tongued leaves; and I see the backs
Of frogs in floating shapes like sunspots in the dark;

My eyes wide open – paisley of green and gold,
Yellow birds chat in cloud flocks overhead;
Crows stand on the clotheslines listening:
The clouds are filled with rain; stones sparkle.

Our babysitter's friend is rubbing herself
Between her legs, having a silent orgasm;
I sense that this is happening but don't understand.

It has something to do with picking so many
And so ripe and such sweet blackberries; I do
Know this. In later years, I would remember it.

Damp grass blading from the earth on fire
Unfolds green titles and a woven script
Crossed and re-crossed upon the tablet stones
That weigh up dream and daylight in the mouth.

Black onyx charts of dream and lucid palms
Sifting the sun of moments' khaki shade
Divide the bedroom of the advent heart,
Holding their discourse on the lizard's tongue.

Golden bars of smeared translucent light
Painted on the morning's eggshell wall
Give back the heart's illusions suddenly,

And unexpectedly a life of sorts
Returns into the shadows fingered by your hand.
You take, once more, this balanced fragile thing.

The sea's blue iron through the fish's eye
Explodes the overweening wren of flight
Unfolding upward through volcanic caves
And lava estuaries circling drowned skies,

There where the iridescent wake of flame
Was stilled in mirrors of the spring's pavilion
Lucid as morning's gaze into a cup
And gathering the untold presences.

The razor blade of light shaves down each tree
Into an undulating face of leaves
Lacking expression, yet expressing all.

The eye is gathered to its cone of thought
And burgeons open with each spray of wind
Flashing on the new beach of the light.

NIGHTSPACE, LIGHTMIND

Green berries burgeon in the hill's blue heart
Beneath a sky where burning white clouds drift,
Invisible cicadas' tuning fork
Of heat, the world so still, radiant and calm;

The visible insignia of light
Spark on green domes crumbling, awash;
Rising heat shimmer in the bright field's midst –
Resonating tines, small voices sing.

A yellow filter set across the world,
Sun blaze is steeping time in fragrances;
Walking I am there and I am here,

My step uncertain in the stiff current
Of grasses tangled, dry, woven, breaking
All around me as I drag them forward.

The clarity of space this afternoon
As all of sunlight fills the summer's world –
Warm smell of light on dusty bricks
From the old chimney dumped in a ditch of vines.

Four of us play at killing horse flies.
Board slats painted across a red brown mare –
Beyond a ways there is a dark stable,
Above the stable steep sky pounds with heat.

A sky of fathomless light blue above
A white rim of midday down near the hill –
And the sun burns right into our necks

As we take the blue flies and the green flies
That are like pieces, chips of bright metal,
Smashing these fragments of sun between two bricks.

Father took me to the boat house once,
We spent the evening fixing the engine.
Fumes from it made a white heavy fog
That settled just above the water line.

We moved about in a toxic sun mist,
The engine like a hot stove between us,
Covering our faces with our shirts –
I passed tools to a voice without a face.

Crouching underneath the smog we put
Sharp questions tapped out on metal pipes
To fellow prisoners – wheels, gears and belts,

Then father sent me out to get fresh air
And I wondered how long he'd stay in there,
Trapped in poisonous fumes and machinery.

The snowfall closes all the eyes of trees,
Touches deeply the waking disrobed earth
And wraps it in a new warmth, cold to touch,
Though warm to being: for so long it falls.

Into the frozen crystal of the night
It brings reviving sleep, a bright amnesia,
The old world left behind, a new held back,
Bestowing its abundant emptiness.

Hollowed out by cold and by the dark,
I lie here in my bed and try to make
My life, myself, as absolutely empty

As I can: hollowed I want to be more
Still, stilled I want to be more hollowed out,
A shell to fill up with a true unknown.

The night's dark music in the ear of time
Circles its sea shape in the conic sun
That watches space on all sides through the hush
Of its blindness, its blood-hidden light.

And yet the mantis on the leave's green shell,
Comes surfing in, will break its many loves
Into smear-bandaged, iv'd casualties
Waiting for opiate viaticum.

My body a junk yard in which I pick
And poke my way among the casualties,
The stark precise unenviable wrecks,

I try to ascertain which bit might serve
To figure a sound first line response
To shatters of blue glass and sun-dried blood.

The multitude of loaves that crumble in the field
Soak up the light that showers from the sun
And dark hosts of the seen and bright unseen
Gather among dust eddies and wind-jars.

These hold the bright impalpable, the touched
Untouched, and all the powers of the earth;
Caesar is uncaesared here, steel made rust,
Amid the pummeling of light and drought.

Walking through the field here I thought
Of those who crossed from little into more,
A somewhat more; exiguous having.

Once real in the world that's pitiless,
And flesh and bone, with shoes upon their feet;
With feet that walked, or tried to, the whole way.

Night fishing in the bay, the lantern globes
A bowl of honey part way down, and there
Three fish are sleeping in reflected light,
Watched by our mirrored faces shimmering around.

And then we lower a curled bright worm
Into an amber cone, their clouded bedroom,
Trying to entice them out into the dark,
The deep green water, mysterious, running.

Wobbles of surface oil catch the light
That hotly burns, with white bugs, near our faces,
Our net a framed and frozen crying out.

Extended poles are like two feelers
From a roach-dark boat. What are we looking for?
After a little longer, we turn off our lamp.

The oval night is filled with moth-shaped dreams
The color of the peppermint green rain that falls
Into the streetlight's shower stall of dust,
White dreams of sugar, satin, and black beads,

Delicate confections, rouge enigmas,
Beneath which I must make my way hands out,
Touching the silken brail of dark walls,
The acupuncture needles of their script.

Hold to the light as to a drowning man
Amid the swelling onrush of the night;
A prickling vertigo will take you down,

But then, as is recounted, let you rise
Three times: the first is for the sun-dropped seeds
To wet your face, then for the seeds to dry, then for the
scaled mask.

Kneeling underneath the moon-dark slate
That drops its pomegranate seeds of light
Deep into the runic blood-marked dawn,
We wait for the field's flowers to appear,

Pale white beneath the gentian of the sky
That smears its cryptogram of graying stars
Against the unwashed board of empty space,
And then awakened earth resumes its dream.

Flowers grow larger, sharper, the white thistle too
Is like a hacked off stubble left behind
By visitors, the deep nocturnal ones,

Who monitor and ratify our dreams;
Bringing their laden coats of bright metal,
Their spiders made of beads, their polished stones.

Deep in the well's black morning glory sheen
Where oil and enigma flash their onyx bright
Mascara case of mirrors, dark lashes
Of presentiment and green iris dark,

The eyes are lured out beyond the edge
Where windows, water eyed, can never save
The dream from its descent, still less the dreamed,
And where the saving footstep cannot fall.

I have been lured there twice, and then three times,
Drinking the juice of peaches with the lamp-lit pit
Sucked out between the two tenacious globes;

But now I've given up my toy balloons.
If anybody wants them now, they're yours.
A white narcotic peace is my last love.

The effervescent ball amid the barroom's dark
Broadcasts its beams of drinking straws that pierce
The frozen slush – a slow-stirred crowd
Perfumed with sweat, hashish, and black perfume,

Searching out susceptible green hearts
Like a harvest man, a daddy long legs,
Wanting to suck the marrow and the blood,
Leaving the flyblown head and eaten crotch.

A small three-legged dog walks in the door
That's left wide open to the lightning wind;
The light has been orange tinfoil all day,

And rain-sweat, seeping here in the coal's precinct,
Has set the hosts of heaven secretly in town
Amid the dust and low beds and paired nails.

The blue cornflower viscera of dawn
Is opened with caesarean of light,
Ripped open on the rooftops' lizard scales,
The screaming babe apocalypse still born,

And absolutely silent, wild as dust
That blows soot galaxies through the alleyways
Where the gold grease of hamburgers and fries
Has spilled into brown diarrhea pools;

Take it or do not take it, damn-ed town
Coagulated into raked mud tracks
Where all the blood of youth and masculinity

Is poured on tap into the urine pools
That hold the bright foam, the rising ferment,
Where bloodshot eyes are stamped into new wine.

The gold-grained wheat within the baking bread
Is filled with greenest grass, with clearest rain,
With blackest soil burning in the sun
That dries and warms it a full handful deep.

The yellow straw that's spiking up the fields
Blossoms in honey bees that buzz the shed
With combs of fragrant sugar, and the tall
And hot pink gladiolas fill their heart valves

With glistening and bright barley through the day
And purple butterflies so hot in threaded lights
Their green stitched into tapestries of sun,

And cloud-lit waters where the damsel fly
Gathers its sea blue from the sky's high fires,
And in the brown woods of the pond the small birds sleep.

Skin crepe paper of the gladiolas' script
Written in distilled, illuminated sweat
Is spread in ripples through the sunblind light
That bathes the eye in tears, a dirty rain

Poisoning the soft depths of the pond,
And touching on the reaches of the skin.
The seed froth of the thick stems cannot reach
Beyond a foul and ancient tangling.

Swathed under diapers of the gray sunset
The luminous and absolutely bogus king
Lets flow his blood and water to the streams,

The milky pinpoints saddling the earth.
Yet laid down in the hothouse windows
The radiant gold cells will rise at last.

Tomatoes, green squash, beans and pepper plants
Fall from the sunburned trees in round bushels,
Brothels of the summer wave spread wide
Their streaming legs into the soil's embrace

And offered all their orifices to light,
Opening their secrets seed by seed,
Clutching the golden tangling of vines,
The open hands of flowers, sulfur yellow.

Platinum and sun-pollen hair: I have come back
To the soft fabrics of the leaf-shaped world
And touched the stems and green vines, root by root,

Weighing the burden of their life and fate,
Touching, inhaling, feeling what is there,
And yet, still, can never feel it as it is.

Closed eyes in the mud count all the moons
That pass above them, light spotted night,
Pulling their heavy bands of living weight,
The spangled denizens of sand blown zodiacs

Dropping their burden to the hollowed earth,
The earth of dreams, of tangled unseen paths
That branch into the green and chess piece woods,
Their shadows tangled into spider webs.

Do we walk on earth or lightly, lightly
Touch it, as though afraid of some contagion,
As though to test some deep mud with the sole?

The earth has bells attached, the silver
And the gold; the painted domes and lucent glass.
Yet what can it be to us, all weight and viscera?

The cold rain falling through glass willow trees
Feeds starfish constellations in the sun-branched roots
So that the diamond and jade talismans
Of worldly fortune and responsive hope

Move through the mirror back where rational desire
Is warmed and watered by blue printed snow,
Where memories have left their chain link tracks
And ripened figs are gathered in soft arms.

Blood-filled traffic knocks the bird bone wall.
It is not this that I touch with fingertips
But shells of all night-singing strands,

Opening their silence to astronomical light,
Unconscious and yet calling to all realms,
And past them, to dimensions all unknown.

The floods that move the standing trees around,
Black islands of green birds that weave themselves
Amid the branches' multitude and liquid eyes,
Project a quiver full of x-rays through the night;

They follow underground and spiral streams
Known only to the hollowed-out initiates,
The partly living and yet partly dead,
Sheltered in canopies of blood-stained cloth,

Who still from their condition draw insight –
The culpable and garish snapshot signs,
If light-scratched pictograms are really signs,

Although their bright duplicity marks them:
The image-ridden squandered chemicals
Amid the networking incendiary cash.

Stair steps strewn with roses, red and black,
Lead into the tower where the empty
Grapefruit colored light illuminates
The severed head-piece of a small black ant,

Surrounded by anthills made of saltpeter,
Gray and black-tipped gulls' feathers,
And hourglasses made of sucked out
Bodies of faint millers; parchment stiff,

Like dusty dry leaves scribbled on
By Benedictine priestesses, hermaphrodites
Of gathered parliaments, portioning the earth;

But in the hourglass of the poison oak,
The birds now hanging in the glasses' waists
Will turn into small secret fire ants.

The brown green arteries of flood will sweep away
The shadows solid as stop signs in the street,
Imposing sea-searched ways and their retorts,
That uterine the still born infant of the wheat;

The brown and frozen floods of ice-black soil,
Crowning their fiery teeth into the mire
Bring forth the shatters of the dew bright earth
And yet cannot spin round the sphere's renewal.

Children in dust slanted window light
Trace out their futures on the grass bright globe
Across the lined and Morse-coded shapes,

All of bright colors, Christmas packages
Of travel and adventures and a purse of gold,
And hope much like an endless Chinese box.

The yellow floods the river's banks and dim brown
Clover puddles in swamps filled up with mud cattails
Long as alder wands and dun-deer brush;
Some lemon yellow tree leaves flick blue sky;

Pencil lead white clouds strain out the light
That slants through crevices; the river flows;
It flows so powerfully: water black as oil,
Not curled with white crest spurts but muddy fern.

The green is broken over black rocks in the sun
And pours out sluices to four clover foam
That dissipates its chances in the stream.

Burning sun river now obscured with cloud
You are the deer upon the hills, squirrels' black-eyed
mania,
The wood chuck's lumpy run, the sun's wide opening.

The bright sun drops its water to the day
And fills green channels of the city up;
The flowers take the luminous and tearing
Rain, filling roots into the earth's spasms.

The grass fills with the green necks
Of beer bottles dumping their water
And their geodesic foam, a million plants
And insects can thrive there, for urine

Fortified with beer, bestows the world.
Night of the earth and night of any earth,
Silent enigma our footsteps echo in,

Filled by the rain, a good hard rain,
You are no longer earth, but something...
Something that we tentatively balance on.

Music of plum breeze, sky cumuli of white,
Fill the aqua background of the deep sunset;
The rift of time is splitting like an eye
That has the light of razors put to it.

Blood of the near sun and the fever flush
Along and through the bramble of the trees,
Fill the not yet fallen snow crystals
With mercury, mercurochrome, and with lead,

Marks of a deeper substance, heavier, strange.
The earth that turns and ripens, rots to its core;
The cars of empty roads give out some hope –

And do not say ‘give us’ since we are also
Denizens of the underwater life,
Breathing thin oxygen through serrated eyes.

The tree becomes the bird that soaks the rain
Into its leaves; every eye of the bright bird
Is burning wet with water; a desert's endless sand,
The opal cloud of moon dust rises up

To mark a face upon each bearded leaf,
And wind will nudge through like a market crowd
Looking for places not to stand but move,
Deep in the arteries, searching for the heart.

The tallest tree to heaven cannot rise
Amid the circuit of the clouds, angels
And holy radiance meet it halfway,

And every eye and every musiced ear
The tree conceives, a sun-filled swaying womb,
Must still be clamoring, a paradox to earth.

Take out the amber from the tiger's eye
And fill it with the womb of empty space,
Strip the green fig tree from its flowered bush
And magnify the apple seven times.

The serpent's double tongue will wrap the globe
And follow every road into the north,
There where its ancient signifying land
Will give a heaven to its time-marked tomb.

On waking let the serpent speak its words
Into the heedless hapless world for starters,
Then yawn its jaws into the gates of heaven.

Or hell: it matters little in the end:
The breaking burning coil of the earth,
White dust a thistle blown to freezing space.

The black rain fills the slanted windy air
And crows are like burnt paper from the hills;
The perfume rises from your burning hair,
Invisible gorgon of depopulated night.

I drink the poison from the rimless cup,
And yet it is all waiting, predestined,
Shining in the dark that sows green stars,
Marking the spaces of dawn's flooded fields.

The perfume rises from your burning hair,
And I am set on fire by the flames.
The child set within your womb-like chest

Is staring at the world with egg-shaped eyes,
Considering the blue salt floods of fate,
Although it cannot know them, scarcely guess.

The rain is needles in the black-sheathed night
That's broken into stars like a piranha's jaws;
The endless throat and tunnel of space-time
Is poised to swallow the green fate of earth.

The man upon a ledge looks up, not down;
He looks into the blackness where the streaks
Of star-seeds blossom into red, and where
He will be going if he has the balls.

Darkest celestial night, deep cave of fate,
Unknown, unknowable diverticula
Leading the whole way. Or are they following?

And you the draughtsman of your scoop of light
In which you neither lead, nor which you follow,
The melting light that is your unknown life.

Softer than roses, roses some of them,
The beauty of vaginas is more lovely
Than the loveliest flowers, than the bluest skies,
Than music, perfect of comparisons –

The bodied, disembodied, and yet both –
As perfect and as smooth in their own way,
Deepest flowering that nothing can disturb,
Existing in its own realm, quite apart,

Flowing as water flows, clinging without gap
Or any pauses, holding, one moment
Leading with no effort to another,

Different yet the same, a rising stretch
Of valleys and of hills, perhaps, but gradually more steep,
Until the civil is quite left behind, and something graver
touched upon.

This rose of roses, a light of deepest dye,
Daily we put you in a glass of water
For it is only this way that we hold your life
And keep it near us, pointing us the way;

Dante in paradise beheld the Rose,
But even his transcendent power of mind
Could not do justice to the thing he saw,
For he had seen a miracle, given

To few and fewer mortals of the earth;
A light of roses and a rose of light,
Its petal angels rising to the heights

Where mortal vision cannot penetrate,
Where mortal thought is lost in radiance
And where the mind is stricken beyond sight.

Beauty of roses, more than beautiful,
Opening anemones of red and white,
And yet your center can't be found,
Petal on petal, nothingness is there,

Only a whirlpool round a crown of gold,
A small crown, since your kingdom is so small –
Kingdom of beauty, smallest that there is,
Or else it is the largest in the world;

And yet that seems unlikely, ugliness
And cruelty break their swords upon the night;
It's difficult to say which one is worse.

And yet the rose, its silky soft curved petals,
So delicate, has remained so long.
These things have triumphed, will continue to.

The curved belly of the black guitar is like
The belly of the plum whose amber colored pit
Opens to the yellow lilies of the spring's blue white,
Filling the dark cave with fire lit memory.

Music is a fire of the blood; my time is coming,
But the crossed oak trees will flood the water
Of this echoing name far down among the black
Purse strings of my mirrored counterparts.

The lunar flask is burning high above,
Pouring its absinthe stars into the drunken night;
The streets are lacquered with my vomit's blood,

And lemon slices of the others' eyes
Spit out sharp acid toward my impassive face;
I will not drink black ink no matter what they do.

The calyx of the lilies holy scent
Is filled with flashing water and the sky is blue
With green reflections of the newest grass;
The light of two moons holds the silent sun.

The stars are stilled within the burnt out bones
The zodiac has sequestered in its fire,
Where the taxidermied influence of light
Has stricken every set and every stage.

A dry and emptied wave cannot bring forth
The salt shells of the old night's tides;
The tines of the god's forks cannot bear it.

The tines of all the forks squeak empty plates,
And all the unturned locks open the sea
To fill all heavens with no flood or fire.

The scent of your body's not a scent but warmth,
And if it is a scent it's like a fruit
Warmed on a windowsill in summer sun
Still carrying the smell of soil, of vines and leaves,

Still carrying the freshness of the air itself
Saturated with the warmth of the hot sun,
A sun so different from the half-shaded sill,
Filled with a power, even with a threat;

Yet what could your body be if not a threat?
Graceful in movement, and yet watchful too,
Watchful in every part, in every limb,

Filled with the power of a gaze, and yet itself
A gaze with its own luminous dark touch
That tenderly traces, and can't leave things whole.

The yellow half-moon slides into your smile
And watermelon seeds are in your teeth;
You spit them out but green vines with zucchini
Grow in their place. Your breasts are two peaches,

Not that big but round and soft and warm
And juicy firm, flowing with honey and with sugar spice,
And every breath you take is like a menthol
Cigarette, fragrant, poisonous, and warm.

Not poisonous exactly but not really safe;
How dangerous your touches are to me,
Even the slightest ones, a mere soft slide

Along my forearm, gives me all tingles.
It's women that should have these things, not men.
Yet I'm a man. And you, just what are you?

The book that flutters through the pages of the sun
Reaches its tendrils through the bluest space
Filling the platinum filaments of heat and light
With yellow flowers and green grapes and plums.

The apple that seduced Eve banished here,
The hanging garden of the phallic moon
Drops tears of burning rain into the lake
That shines like silver in the blue green night.

The steps that aim the sun across the sky
Leave hieroglyphic markings on the daylight moon
And empty sockets where five eyes had been.

Crumble the light into my waiting palms;
The sun will freeze as bright as any day
In winter when white wheat is combed by wind.

The yellow scotch pours from the drunken moon.
It smiles and then it staggers in the sky,
A man with just a head, black tuxedo made of stars,
Two oak root hands that reach into the sea

And hold the harbor's mud as black as oil
Or a black onyx ring, the ring they took from Jesus
When he died. The black sky broke into a shit earthquake,
The moon was a violet purple like a bruise

And blood like hemorrhages of Jupiter you see
On maps of boys' rooms when they think
That they'll be scientists instead of truck drivers,

Or possibly much worse, though I don't know
If you can get very much worse than that.
The Highway of Death's traffic soaks blood without
cease.

Round breasts of women and their skin so soft,
Black silken perfume flowing from their dresses,
Slim white melting candles in their panties
Warming their two legs like small fireplace logs

Gathered from a beach, the blue green of copper
Flickering the room and soft red lights
That do not mean what others think they do:
You are the virgin of the fireplace,

Holy of holies, yet without your clothes.
Radiantly naked, you are even more precious.
This is your real self; the webbing of the streets

No longer holds you in its dusty threads,
Full of amber sucked dry moths, the dead
That still can shiver, all just barely, in the wind.

Beautiful black trees moving in the wind,
Staggering their topmost crowns like deep seaweed
Or like a deadly drunken man whose hair
Is fingered and then tousled by the night.

They say the lord protects both drunks and fools.
The rain like pumpkin seeds is thick and heavy
And so icy cold; I just have to get out of it
Or else I'm going to die. Blue loss of blood.

Gold coins are just beyond the corner
And brown barley bread; vegetable soup
With beans and carrots and white grains of rice.

My soul was white once. And yet should a man
Wander the streets at night, nowhere to go,
Nothing to eat and no place to lay his head?

Green fire in the frozen apple trees
Floods the hoarfrost grass with white deer eyes
That widen deeply through star-clouded nights
And slowly turn to green and then to brown.

The heart the beats inside the pockmarked earth
Is torn up by their hooves; farmers kill them,
Preferring the white shield of the winter moon.
And I have seen their bodies gutted blue.

The other frozen eyes that populate the dark
Are waiting for their lashes to unthaw,
Like snow-iced eaves of roofs, then ripen soft

As berries in the summer of the year –
Multitudes of eyes, green and red and black,
Some small, some human, some wide as the spring night.

Hearing your laughter through the sparkling woods
I followed the blond hayricks of the moon
Leading me through the purple countryside
Etched with huge stars, the broken things of light;

They let us ride a long time in the back.
Where was the driver? Where was anyone?
The girl who lay beside me was all soft
And golden in the night, and warm;

Then gradually she got so hot the hay
Was starting to burn brown and black, much like
A cigarette, but there was no flame.

Her eyes were green as grass, her teeth
Were brown as dried corncobs. I had to get away.
She wrapped me in her long arms as I slept.

When I close my eyes I see my dreams
Of black space and of deeper night
Full of the tall trees standing round my bed.
Their leaves are showered down on me

As I look up through the charred branches
Like squid tentacles, lesions up and down,
And then a white frost coats the tree with webs,
And I am taken into its black arms.

Although I am absorbed by the wood grain,
It feels warm inside. I see green particles like stars
And brown blood vessels branching through the wood's

Increasingly soft and porous sponge-like flesh.
And then there were green eyes that opened, closed,
Then opened even wider once again, and closed.

Print every Sutra on a grain of wheat,
Make every Bible of a bamboo tree.
The clouds move spectrally across the sky
As though from west to east or east to west.

The sun is stilled in heaven; the earth has stopped.
The numbers racing on our faces now
Have the eyes, the noses, the cheekbones
Of each other; like shadows in a room.

And then the dreams of napalm came to me,
Dreams of white phosphorous. And needle
Fragmentation ordinance so fine.

Sun of the tiger fur of fields striped with gold
And wine dark red, we will be there one day.
With golden daffodils floating above the ground.

The angels of the lord move up and down
The golden turning ladder of the sun.
Life is the diamond ring, or maybe jade,
But death is the coveted black onyx prize.

Death is the panther in the dark room
That you cannot see; death is the powder,
Purest white, you contemplate, it's the loss
Of everything you have achieved, the thought

Of everything you failed to achieve, the dream
Of everything you wanted but could not;
The mirror showing you the wrinkled skin;

The photograph showing you drought-spidered earth,
Death, your desire to go there and to stay;
Death your final indolence, your lack of home.

The roses on the garage's espalier
Are yellow roses, always my favorite;
Now I say farewell to things that do not fare,
Whether well or ill. They are the things of earth.

They have no mind we know of, no destiny;
Fate must come from a deep presentiment
And this from deep within self-sensing mind.
Unless the roses in their swirled darkness

Can delicately sense themselves somehow.
They always have been the strangest of all flowers.
Swirl upon swirl of darkness, silken, obscure,

An image of what some of us must be,
Even if privately, and therefore all,
Except that some must do it all for good.

Bluest of gentians, deep rose of all lilacs –
The night is not more deep than your star's fall;
O no it is the sliding of a single drop
Where rain made a sparkling diamond for your dark.

How can you be a part of all the earth
That is itself so dark, sometimes not beautifully;
You are the blackness that we long to have,
The deepest ocean of our final sleep.

For you have promised each of us pure rest,
Yet not in a despairing way but – sheer wonder!
How can your color be so rich and deep?

How can your depths of darkness still speak forth
Your luminous, incomparable shine?
Gazing into you, strangely, all fears are stilled.

(CT)

The black fire of your hair is full of dormant wishes.
They must gather to your heart and overflow
In passion and in memory, in hope and fear;
A silent waterfall of dreams is falling there.

Your visions are held captive by the spells
That took root in the deep well of your being –
Sometimes, long ago, or yesterday: gather
The bright mud clinging to your eyes and brow,

Smear it like excrement beneath your foot,
Reduce it all to ash and smear it on my face,
Calligraphy and portents, archaic syllables

And yet the needed ones. Walk out then toward
The night possessed and stark, depopulated
Quadrants of the city, finding what you dream.

AFTERWORD

Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan. During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had occasion to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object – that is, an experience, a scene, an event. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any which remains merely language, merely words, is negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this has a certain political significance, in the sense that then people may think, and then act, differently than they had before. And the results of that are unpredictable.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway – worse than terrible, I really had no clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that you could just do it all by yourself – or with a small amount of help, which I've had – by means of computers, the new printing technology, and of course the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Almost 3,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that something you consciously strove for?

Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. And that seemed to me the way to do it.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I'm trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work – Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

All right, but can you say whether they are modern or classical?

Classical. My favorite is Mung Hao-Ren, actually.

There are many other things to talk about, but perhaps you could mention some of your influences.

I would just say that I think the reader will notice echoes of Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, Keats, and others. There's Frost, about whom I wrote a short book, there's Yeats, and in particular Whitman, but also more contemporary people such as Oppen, Elizabeth Bishop, and others. I wrote four books of poems, which I called odes, partly in imitation of Larry Eigner and the French poet Pierre Reverdy. A long poem called *The Second Life of Fire* was influenced by Ashbery, but also by Breton and Heiner Muller. An early long poem called *Second World* was indebted to Blake, Shelley, and Whitman, but also to Robert Duncan, Ginsburg, and Ted Hughes, as well as Hugh MacDiarmid.

My work in general seems to occupy an intersection between Surrealism and Romanticism, speaking just very broadly, a conjunction that many modern poets have worked, but in recent years perhaps rather few, at least in English.

You've written on Frost, isn't that right?

Yes, it was originally my dissertation and then was published by a small Canadian press. I wrote a short book on the American Surrealist Philip Lamantia – I knew him slightly, actually – and then I wrote a book on Elizabeth Bishop which was accepted by Rodopi, but I withdrew it because I wanted to change some things. Health problems and other things intruded. But I hope to resubmit the revised book to them again pretty soon.

As a way to conclude: what are your feelings about living in Taiwan?

I love Taiwan, the place, the people. And the history is very interesting, and also very moving. When I came here, it seemed to me that I had found a place where life was in some ways more natural and where the people were themselves more sensible and sane. But don't tell them that I said that.

Ok. We promise we won't tell anyone.

Ok. Then my secret's safe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

STEVEN FRATTALI is an American writer living in Taipei and Boston. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* (ELS,2002) and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*. (Peter Lang, 2005)

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